Spolia *in Fortifications and the Common Builder in Late Antiquity*

MNEMOSYNE SUPPLEMENTS HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY



JON M. FREY

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By

Jon M. Frey



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Although scholars today are increasingly interested in fortifications as more than evidence of military strategy, at the time my request to engage in a detailed study of these defenses as examples of spoliation was somewhat unusual. Thus, I thank the First Byzantine Ephorate, Florens Felten, Walter Gauss, Stephan Hiller, Klaus Hoffelner, Edward Pollhammer and Elena Walter-Karydi for allowing me to work at Aegina and for granting me permission to reprint images of the Inscription Wall. I would also like to thank the Fifth Byzantine Ephorate and the Fifth Classical Ephorate, Jean Li, Clare Pickersgill, Stella Raftopoulou, Guy Sanders, Susan Walker, John Wilkes and Geoffrey Waywell for helping in various ways at Sparta. I also thank Claire Taylor and Cambridge University Press for permission to reprint images of the fortifications at Sparta. It has been a continual source of happiness to be able to spend my summers working at the Excavations at Isthmia and I thank the directors and staff for their help at various stages of this project.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In terms of its component parts, the present work mimics the overall construction of the early Byzantine fortifications that are its object of interest. Just like the ashlar façades of post-classical civic and regional defenses, on the surface, this study is largely concerned with the reused fragments of architecture commonly referred to as *spolia*. For a number of art historians and archaeologists, such recycled objects have become a hot topic in the past few decades to the point that "*spolia* studies" might now be considered a specialized field with its own scholarly methods and traditions.[1] At the same time though, the current conversation remains firmly rooted in the same small set of examples and interpretations that were first offered by those who invented the concept during the Renaissance. In this respect, it is my goal to demonstrate through a detailed analysis of a select number of fortification walls in southern Greece that the inclusion of a wider variety of periods, places and monument types will encourage a consideration of other issues beyond the traditional debates over the utility, aesthetics and ideology of reuse. Although they have been largely ignored in the past, fortifications were just as important as churches in the later Roman and medieval eras and we would do well to consider them as more than evidence for change in military technology and strategy.[2] The numerous defensive walls that appeared throughout Europe and the Mediterranean between the third and seventh centuries A.D. did not just protect the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. As physical barriers to movement into and out of a city, walls shaped and defined the urban environment.[3] As landmarks visible

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1 Summaries of the development of *spolia* as a subject of study can be found in Kinney 1995; Poeschke 1996; Kinney 1997; Saradi 1997 and Kinney 2001; 2006; 2011a.

2 Traditionally, the topic of fortifications in the later Roman and Byzantine Mediterranean has been addressed in the form of large scale, synthetic works such as Winter 1971; Lawrence 1979; 1983; Johnson 1983a; Lander 1984 and Foss and Winfield 1986. It is only in the last decade that scholars like Bakirtzis (2005; 2010; 2012); Crow (2007); DeStaebler (2008a; 2008b); Dey (2010; 2011; 2012); Jacobs (2009) and Niewöhner (2010; 2011) have begun to engage in the type of detailed analyses of civic and regional defenses that show the importance of these monuments in larger studies of the ancient Mediterranean. Gregory's (1993) monograph-length work on the Hexamilion and Fortress at Isthmia represents a pioneering effort in this direction.

3 Christie 2001, 116; Bowden 2003, 96–98; Bakirtzis 2010, 353, 368; Crow 2013, 423; Jacobs 2013, 19.

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from a great distance, fortifications served as the primary outward expression of a city's unique identity.[4] Perhaps most importantly of all, as costly and complex construction projects, these defensive works offered unique challenges to architects and builders and the solutions they embody served as models for future monuments both in terms of function and aesthetics. Therefore, it is clear that the appearance of materials reused in the construction of these fortifications should become a larger part of the discourse on architecture as a whole and spoliation in particular.

Yet the *spolia* embedded in the façades of these early Byzantine fortifications frequently obscured the equally important mortar and rubble core that actually gave the walls their structure and bulk. Likewise, the present work's focus upon *spolia* is merely the most recognizable part of a deeper examination of what the practice of reuse tells us about other significant issues such as the process of construction in post-classical antiquity, the individual builders who erected civic defenses, and the important role that such lower-level, historically anonymous agents played in bringing about architectural, stylistic, and possibly even social change. It is frequently the case that the uniform appearance of classical buildings encourages us to imagine them as the perfect realization of an individual's architectural design. Such an approach is further supported by ancient written sources that commonly associate buildings with the creative genius or financial backing of a single patron or architect.[5] Thus, in studying the Forum of Augustus or the Arch of Constantine for example, we often fail to acknowledge the basic fact that these monuments are actually the work of a host of skilled and unskilled laborers who faced the difficult task of turning architectural ideas into reality. More recently though, architectural historians have begun to focus upon, rather than explain away, irregularities and imperfections in the fabric of buildings, which reveal fascinating insights into the complex process of erecting a monument in antiquity.[6] Through their efforts we are encouraged to recognize the many challenges inherent in acquiring and organizing the labor and materials needed to create the works that we study in finished form today. On occasion, these intensive architectural surveys have even allowed us to identify heterogeneous techniques of construction within single monuments that must represent the work of individual crews or crafts-

4 Greenhalgh 1999, 7; Bachrach 2000, 192; Christie 2001, 107–109; Bowden 2003, 102; Bakirtzis 2005; 2010; Niewöhner 2011, 118–119; Bakirtzis 2012; Jacobs 2013, 93.

5 Taylor 2003, 9–12.

6 While Stevens (1966) may be considered a pioneering effort in this direction, more recent works by Delaine (1997), Lancaster (1998; 1999; 2000), Ousterhout (1999), Shirley (2001), Taylor (2003) and Wilson Jones (2003) are all important examples of this change in focus.

men.[7] This is a particularly exciting development, for such studies show that even though these lower level agents rarely receive even a passing reference in the written sources, it is nevertheless possible to enter into a discussion of the techniques and traditions that informed their behavior through a close "reading" of the buildings that they left behind. The fact that we do not know these masons and builders by name should not be used as an excuse to ignore their efforts. After all, we have rarely allowed the anonymity of many architects and master builders to stand in the way of our analyses of their designs. Instead, it can and should be our goal to give equal consideration to the actions and motivations of all agents at various levels within the organizational structure of a building project. This is no small matter, for the monuments that resulted from this collective activity did not simply stand as examples of architectural practice to be imitated and improved upon by future generations but they also served to establish the physical setting for nearly all aspects of daily life in antiquity.

The evidence of reused architecture is uniquely suited to this type of intensive study of building activity. For the very lack of uniformity that has traditionally encouraged the analysis of *spolia* as unique objects unrelated to their secondary contexts can be put to a better use in helping us to understand the process by which individuals utilized these materials in construction. In order to do this, we must proceed beyond a simple identification of a spoliated object's original function to a more careful consideration of what its present location and appearance tells us about the series of choices and actions that were instrumental in the transition between its initial and subsequent phases of use. If we acknowledge that architectural reuse had always been practiced throughout antiquity but that the political, economic and religious changes of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. encouraged the neglect and eventual destruction of classical monuments on an unprecedented scale, it is possible to see that the more interesting question concerns the ways in which architects and builders adapted to this revolutionary change in the supply of building materials that were provided from these ruins. For example, even though it is typically not possible to identify the actual agents by name, it is clear that the decision to reuse parts of an entire building made available through demolition or decay must have been made by those in charge of the overall construction project.[8] Yet it is equally certain that the manner in which each ashlar, column

7 Ousterhout 1999, 57; Taylor 2014, 202.

8 For the organizational structure of a building project, see Anderson 1997, 1–180; Lancaster 1998; 1999; DeLaine 2000; Bouras 2002; Zanini 2003, 2007; Bachrach 2010, 40–44; Dey 2011, 71–99 and Anderson 2014.

and molding was transported to the building site, selected for use and set in place was left to a number of individual teams and workers to determine for themselves. Therefore, while it is always worthwhile to consider the intended meaning behind the use of *spolia* in a building as a whole, it is even more interesting and potentially revealing to study the ways in which an individual builder's decision to reuse a certain architectural fragment in a specific way may represent an act of compliance, resistance, or even indifference to instructions or traditions on a much more personal level.

It is remarkable then, that in spite of their informative potential, *spolia* continue to be mentioned only in passing in archaeological reports and architectural studies (and almost solely in late antique and medieval contexts, as the word *spolia* is rarely used for earlier instances of reuse). In those moments when it is discussed in detail, the use of *spolia* is usually treated as an isolated sub-field of limited interest to non-specialists. Therefore, it is also my goal to demonstrate that the study of reused architecture is relevant to a much wider range of historical and archaeological analyses. Its use as evidence for the activity of low status builders not only aligns well with the recent growth of interest in the utilization of agency theory in anthropology, but also suggests that other historically significant changes may have begun at levels in society too low to merit mention in the written sources.[9] Thus, it is my hope that others will see the potential of this approach and engage in equally detailed studies of similar architectural and archaeological evidence that has been insufficiently utilized in the past because it does not support the common narratives built around the ancient texts. We must acknowledge that monuments and artifacts also tell an important story and deserve to be considered on their own merit as documents of activity in the past.

The Structure of the Present Study

Because an intensive examination of the use of *spolia* in fortifications as a demonstration of the agency of builders and work crews in late antiquity concerns a number of different specialized topics with which some may not be well acquainted, it is worthwhile to offer an introduction to each of these fields of study. Therefore, the next chapter provides brief surveys of the study of *spolia*, the utilization of agency theory in archaeology, the roles played by

9 On the growing popularity of agency theory in anthropology, see Dornan 2002; Dobres and Robb 2005.

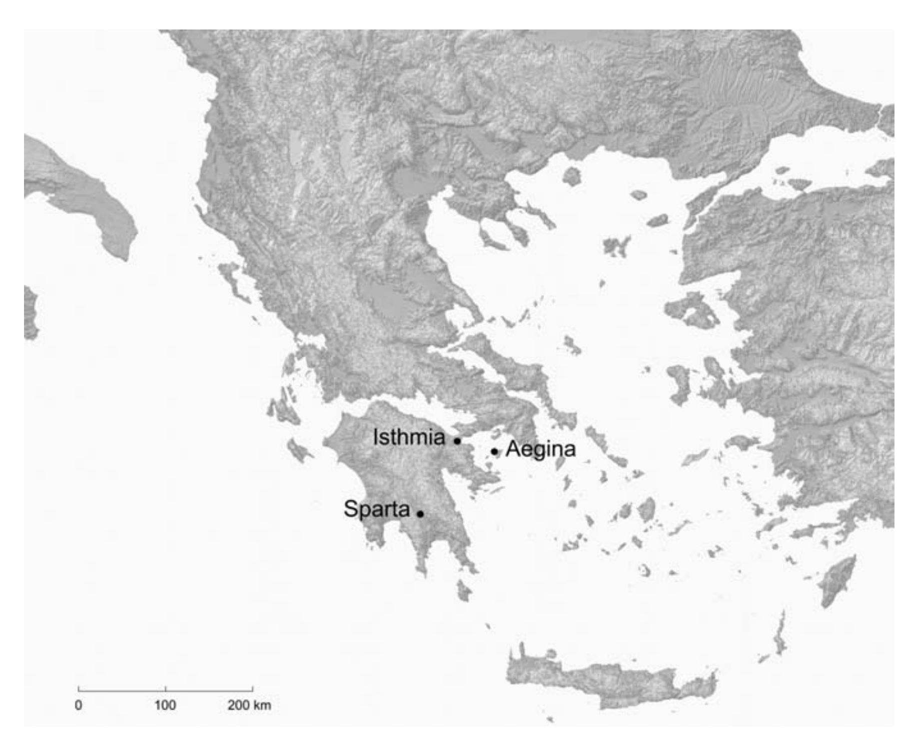


FIGURE 1.1 *Map of the Greek peninsula showing the locations of the project case studies, modified from base map provided by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under creative commons license*
DRAWING J. FREY

individuals at different levels of a building project and the examination of fortifications in the eastern Mediterranean. In each of the subsequent three chapters, I demonstrate that an intensive survey of fortification walls reveals important insights into the specific actions and motivations of those who were given the challenging task of building civic and regional defenses from recycled architecture. Each case study, based on fieldwork conducted in 2004–2005, is focused on similarly sized sections of defensive walls in the Roman province of Achaea that were built at the same time in the early fifth century A.D. in response to a region-wide threat of invasion. When seen in the context of these overarching similarities, the details of construction for each project reveal a unique combination of upper level design interests and lower level variations in execution.

In the first case, workers on the island of Aegina built a large span of the settlement's defenses from the remains of a single building that had at one point been covered in inscriptions. A close inspection of the wall reveals that

the display of inscribed or decorative blocks was carried out with an inconsistency that must have resulted from a lack of project-level instruction concerning any one manner of "proper" reuse. Rather, it is far more likely that it was left to the builders to utilize the materials in whatever way they found to be most appropriate. Yet, any conclusions that this reuse was careless or merely economizing in nature should be tempered by clear evidence for the masons' continued utilization of centuries-old building techniques in order to integrate their construction seamlessly into a pre-existing Archaic-era barrier / temenos wall around the Temple of Apollo and associated structures.

At Sparta, the location of the second case study, a very well-preserved section of the civic defenses shows that in addition to building a strong, secure wall, workers here were clearly interested in exploring the decorative potential of this new type of building material. A careful survey of the fortification shows that builders selected blocks from a wide range of different structures with an eye toward the color and shape of the material. Along the lower half of the wall, masons placed brilliant white marble and reddish-orange limestone ashlars in alternating rows while closer to the top of the wall, they used square and round shaped *spolia* in an alternating sequence that has been described as a late antique imitation of a Doric order frieze course.[10] At the same time though, inconsistencies in the execution of these alternating patterns can only mean that this interest in referring to the classical past in a way that also exhibited a developing late antique aesthetic was being expressed at the level of individual work crews and not at the level of the project coordinator or architect.

In my third case study at the site of Isthmia, builders erected a large defensive enclosure against the inner face of an immense wall that spanned the width of the entire Isthmus of Greece. Unlike the previous two cases, here a careful investigation of two different sections of this fortification suggests a more consistent approach aimed at limiting the display of any indication of the use of *spolia* to the Northeast and South Gates. Given the fact that a project of this size must have required a greater degree of imperial involvement and control, we might expect that this restricted use of *spolia* is the result of a more closely managed building project. Yet, at the same time, the two different parts of the enclosure wall studied here reveal that, in spite of a uniform supply of recycled blocks from the nearby panhellenic sanctuary, different sections of the fortress were erected using different techniques. Such a combination of similarities and differences suggests that, once again, within a general framework governing

10 Gregory 1982b.

the source and use of construction materials, individual teams of workers, which in this case had likely been assembled from different regions of the Mediterranean, were free to follow whatever traditions and innovations in building that each deemed to be most effective.

The evidence of these detailed studies allows for a number of important observations. First, this project as a whole demonstrates that fortifications and other forms of secular architecture should be more carefully considered in the development of theories concerning the origins and meaning of *spolia* in late antiquity and the medieval period. Second, when taken into account, the unique individual details of each fortification project clearly show that at this early stage of development, there were no commonly agreed upon "rules" among architects and master builders governing the use of *spolia*. Instead, the increased supply of recycled construction material provided the greatest challenge to the lower level builders on construction projects, who responded in each location in a unique way that addressed the needs, traditions and aesthetic principles they felt to be most important. Third, the conclusion that the use of *spolia* in these fortifications was largely experimental and locally determined aligns remarkably well with recent trends in the military history of the later Roman empire, where the concept of a grand strategy has been replaced by a more nuanced understanding of various local responses to the threat of invasion.[11] Finally, when seen in the context of archaeological applications of agency theory, this evidence as a whole suggests that while historians often speak of the great works of patrons and architects, the day-to-day actions of common workers played an equally important role in developing what would come to be a widespread architectural practice. Such a conclusion hints at the role played by historically anonymous individuals and groups in other significant aspects of life as the classical world slowly transformed into the medieval.[12]

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11 Whittaker 1993; 1994; Isaac 2004; Heather 2010.

12 It is important to note at this point that that while the number and type of objects that are considered examples of *spolia* continue to grow in scholarly investigations of the subject, the present study will focus primarily on the reuse of elements of monumental architecture and not examples of sculpture or certain luxury items that often remained in use in different capacities for centuries. To be sure, sculpted elements such as architectural moldings and reliefs are often reused as building blocks, and their decorative qualities frequently can be shown to have played a role in the manner of their secondary use. At the same time, even though the methods and theories governing the study of *spolia* are broadly applicable to art and architecture alike, the post-classical reuse of works such as statues, sarcophagi, gems, cameos, or objects in silver and gold constitutes a

somewhat different set of reuse practices that cannot be studied here in the detail that they deserve. For studies of attitudes toward and use of statues in late antiquity, see Mango 1963; Brandenburg 1989; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990; Curran 1994; Hannestad 1994; 1999; Saradi 2006, 364–389 and Kristensen 2010; 2012; 2013. On the reuse of gemstones and other small-scale portable works, see Krug 1993; Forsyth 1995; and Kinney 2006; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007 and Kinney 2011b. For works on the appearance of reused sculpted elements in monumental works of architecture, such as city walls, see James 1996; Bardill 1999; Bakirtzis 2005; Jacobs 2009 and Bakirtzis 2012.

CHAPTER 2

Themes

What are *Spolia*?

After more than a half-century of careful study and in spite of a growing interest among scholars in a wide range of disciplines, the subject of *spolia* remains as intriguing and as difficult to define as ever. For F.W. Deichmann, whose 1940 analysis of the arrangement of reused columns and capitals in early Christian churches marks one of the first systematic studies of the evidence, *spolia* were fragments of older buildings that had been inserted into a new architectural context in a way that was intended to draw attention to their decorative qualities.[1] In their prominent display of ornamental surfaces, *spolia* were distinct from other utilitarian forms of reuse, which could be identified in the walls and foundations of buildings throughout the ancient world. In Deichmann's opinion, this new use of *spolia* was strictly a late antique phenomenon, specifically tied to the sacred architecture of Christianity and Islam. Yet nearly all subsequent studies of *spolia* have questioned these tightly defined chronological, religious and typological boundaries so that it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve any form of scholarly consensus on the issue. For example, where the term *spolia* has traditionally called to mind architectural elements—most often reused columns, capitals and blocks with carved moldings—scholars have more recently begun to consider reused sculptures, inscriptions, or gemstones as equally worthy of careful study.[2] The same can be said about the interpretation of spoliation as a practice originating in Late Antiquity. For more recent studies have demonstrated not only that earlier as well as significantly later examples of reuse also functioned as *spolia*, but also that the careful study of reuse in these other periods opens new and interesting avenues of analysis.[3] Thus, even though the traditional dichotomy of aesthetics vs. utility continues to cast a long shadow over the study of reuse, this rather limited scheme now shares a place alongside a wide variety of methodological and theoretical approaches focused upon every aspect and stage of the process from the ancient choice of an object for reuse to the modern decision to study that object

1 Deichmann 1940, 114.
2 Forsyth 1995; Krug 1995; Kinney 1997; Coates-Stephens 2002; Kinney 2006; 2011b.
3 On earlier examples, see Kinney 1997; Frey 2015. For studies of parallel examples in modern and contemporary art and architecture, see Brilliant and Kinney 2011.

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as an example of *spolia*. All of this makes the seemingly simple question "What are *spolia*?" ever more difficult to answer.

It is likely that much of the problem lies in the simple fact that in antiquity, *spolia* was never used as a term that defined a unique class of recycled objects. For Romans, the word *spolium* referred either to the skin or hide of an animal or to the arms and armor stripped from a defeated enemy, while the verb *spoliare* referred to the act of stripping or robbing a person, or plundering a town.[4] Certainly, this type of spoliation could involve architectural elements—the removal of columns from the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens following Sulla's sack of the city is a frequently cited example of this practice—but it is never the case that a particular type of plundered object is consistently distinguished from the rest. Rather, as Pliny the Elder's (*Nat.* 36.45) account of this event shows, building materials in particular were referred to by the same name regardless of their secondary use.[5] This would seem to reflect a much older Greek tradition as well. Thucydides (1.93.2) refers to the various materials recycled for use in the Themistoklean walls as "stelai from monuments and worked stones" (στῆλαι ἀπὸ σημάτων καὶ λίθοι εἰργασμένοι). Likewise, in describing the city of Ilium, Strabo (*Geography* 13.1.38) simply states that the stones were taken over from the destroyed city in order to rebuild the other cities (οἱ λίθοι πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐκείνων ἀνάληψιν μετηνέχθησαν). In fact, the closest parallel to our modern term *spolia* is the Latin substantive *rediviva*, but the few occurrences of this word do not exhibit a consistency of use that would indicate its function as a term for a particular class of objects. Inasmuch as the word is tied to concepts of "rebirth" or "regeneration," the use of *rediviva* in an architectural context likely would have encouraged a positive interpretation of the practice of reuse.[6] On the other hand, in his prosecution of G. Verres, Cicero's use of the term to describe reused columns shows that they were less desirable than newly carved examples—a sentiment that is again reflected in his observation that L. Aemilius Paullus reused columns to build the Basilica Aemelia, but that they were soon replaced with new columns when additional funds became available.[7] At the same time though, Vitruvius uses *rediviva* in more

4 On the classical use of the term *spolia* see Brenk 1987; Alchermes 1994 and Kinney 1995, 1997, 2006.

5 Sic est inchoatum Athenis templum Iovis Olympii, ex quo Sulla Capitolinis aedibus advexerat columnas. See also Plutarch, *Life of Publicola* XV.4, where the word "κίονες" is used in what is believed to be a reference to the same columns.

6 For a recent discussion of the political and social motivations for restoration of buildings, see Kalas 2010.

7 Vtrum existimatis minus operis esse unam columnam efficere ab integro novam nullo lapide

neutral terms in order to differentiate between new and old stone used as a bedding layer beneath a mosaic.[8]

Even when we consider a wider range of written sources that discuss reuse practices more generally, we see the same diversity of attitudes.[9] Thus, for every Barbarius Pompeianus who states that he paved the streets of Abella with stone "cut from the mountains, and not removed from ruined monuments," and every Ammianus Marcellinus who recounts the riots set off by a Roman prefect's use of materials stripped from other buildings, there is a Cassiodorus who reports on the import of marbles from Rome for use in Ravenna or a Constantine the Rhodian who praises the variety of materials collected for use in the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople.[10] Likewise, for every Marc the Deacon, who describes the reuse of the sacred marble work from the Marneion at Gaza for paving stones as an act of desecration, there is a John Chrysostom or a Socrates who is at odds to explain away the continued display of pre-Christian statuary in public places.[11] The evidence of the law codes is no more definitive. For the frequently cited edicts banning the stripping of monuments for their ornament or the transfer of such materials between cities and especially from public to private buildings speak to an imperial disapproval of a practice that nevertheless was growing in popularity.[12] In fact, passages in Eusebius and Procopius concerning the display in Constantinople of art and architecture from every province show that emperors were not opposed to engaging the same types of activities that they themselves had forbidden.[13]

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redivivo an quattuor illas reponere? nemo dubitat quin multo maius sit novam facere. *In Verrem* 2.1.147.

8 Tunc insuper staturninetur ne minore saxo, quam qui possit manum implere. staturninationibus inductis, rudus si novum erit, ad tres partes una calcis misceatur, si redivivum fuerit, quinque ad duo mixtionis habeant responsum. *De Arch* (7.1.3)

9 For discussions of attitudes toward spoliation in the written sources, see Brenk 1987; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990; Alchermes 1994; Saradi 1997; Coates-Stephens 2002; 2003; Liverani 2004; Baldini Lippolis 2007; Kalas 2010 and Kristensen 2010.

10 For the Pompeianus inscription, see Ward-Perkins 1999, 231. On the riot aganist Lampiadus in Rome, see Ammianus Marcellius, *Rerum Gestarum* 27.3.8–10 Cassiodorus *Variae* I.6 and III.9 are discussed in Brenk 1987 and the enkomion of Constantine the Rhodian is discussed in Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 53.

11 Marc the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 76; John Chrysostom *De laudibus sancti Pauli homeliae* (PG 50), col. 561; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, X.58. See Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 50.

12 *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.1, 15.1.14; Maj. *Nov.* 4.

13 For Constantine's collection of art and architecture from temples, see Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.54.1–7. For Justinian's orders for the transfer of statues from the island of Philae to Constantinople See Procopius' *De Bello Persico* 1.19.34–37.

This is not to say that the written sources are without value, but it must be kept in mind that in every case, those who record and comment upon these examples of reuse are not the people who actually carried out the act of spoliation and while these authors are certainly closer in time to the actions (and reactions) they record, they are nevertheless in much the same position as we are today of attempting to understand the thoughts and motivations of another individual.[14] Thus, as R. Coates-Stephens concludes, "… in the ancient world there was just as much ambiguity regarding the question of *spolia* as there is today amongst art historians and archaeologists."[15]

By most accounts, the use of the expression *spolia* as an art historical term actually began sometime in the 16th century, when artists and antiquarians themselves reused a word that illustrated their ideas concerning the relationship of the Renaissance to the classical past. Given the traditional opinion at the time that the rise and fall of society was cyclical and that the Renaissance was a time of renewal, the choice of a word that referred to objects of value stripped from a defeated foe must have seemed especially appropriate.[16] For Italian painters, architects and writers at the time such as Francesco Albertini, Raphael Sanzio da Urbino, and Giorgio Vasari, *spoglie* were pieces of decorative architecture that had been stripped from a defeated classical past and displayed in the context of a victorious, yet culturally declined, Christian medieval present. Perhaps just as importantly, the ability of these scholars and artisans to recognize certain artifacts as works of the classical period placed them in an elite group of individuals who through their work were bringing about the rebirth of that earlier, better society.[17]

Yet even at this early date, the passing references to these *spoglie* within the context of larger art historical surveys and biographies showed that at the moment of its invention this newly conceived class of objects defied attempts at a simple interpretation. The brief discussion of the topic that appears in the preface of Vasari's 1550 *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors and Architects*—a collection of Renaissance artist biographies that is generally regarded as the first work of modern art history—serves as a particularly clear case in point.[18] On the one hand, *spolia* were a sign of neglect and disregard for the monuments of the past. These objects were first made available when disrespectful emperors, zealous clergy, and barbarian invaders turned the buildings

14 Kristensen 2010.

15 Coates-Stephens 2003, 352. See also Coates-Stephens 2002, 280.

16 Haskell 1993, 112–127.

17 Kinney 1997, 121–122.

18 Vasari and De Vere 1996, 9–15.

of the classical era into collapsed heaps of debris, suitable only for use as a quarry. The loss of such monuments inevitably led to the deterioration of artistic ability, so that sculptors and builders who could no longer follow the models of the past, chose instead to incorporate the actual fragments of that better era in their creations. However, as examples of technical and artistic excellence, these *spolia* continued to have a positive effect on those who used them, slowing the inevitable movement in the direction of artistic decline. Thus, *spolia* were at one and the same time a remedy against the process that they both symbolized and enabled.

In spite of its potential to lead to a more nuanced understanding of reuse, the negative aspects of Vasari's assessment of *spolia* remained the predominant interpretive model for some time to come. Then, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, almost certainly as a result of a shift in emphasis away from the tradition of classical naturalism among contemporary artists, the evaluation of post-classical art and architecture took on a decidedly more positive character.[19] As part of this re-evaluation, Deichmann's landmark 1940 study showed how the careful analysis of *spolia* could serve as more than anecdotal evidence in service of larger theories of decline and instead become a topic of direct interest in its own right.[20] Two subsequent studies in particular were especially instrumental in drawing attention both to the number of examples of spoliation throughout the Mediterranean and the variety of potential interpretations for the practice of reuse. More importantly still, in many ways these works may be taken as representatives of the two most predominant trends in the scholarship that has followed in their wake.

Written in a manner that reflects the wanderings in Italy that inspired the project, A. Esch's *Spolien: Zum Wiederverwendung antike Baustücke und Skulpturen in mittelalterlichen Italien* was one of the first studies to offer a wide-ranging consideration of the motivations and methods behind nearly all conceivable types of reuse that took place in the medieval era.[21] In presenting each aspect of *spolia* use and its study as a range of possibilities—for example, a marble statue could be burned for lime or left entirely intact due to a misidentification of the subject—Esch called attention not just to the complexity and diversity of the phenomenon, but also to the need to study it in more careful detail. For those willing to explore less easily demonstrated interpreta-

19 Alois Riegl's *Die Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1927) is commonly held to have been instrumental in bringing about this change of mentality.

20 Deichmann 1940.

21 Esch 1969.

tions, Esch argued that *spolia* held the potential to reveal significant insights into late antique and medieval individuals' perceptions of their own classical past.[22]

In contrast to Esch's anecdotal and loosely organized presentation of *spolia* in all its diversity and complexity, F.W. Deichmann's *Die Spolien in der spätantike Architektur* offered a methodical survey of predominantly Christian monumental architecture throughout the Mediterranean in demonstration of a more limited interpretation of the practice of reuse.[23] In revisiting many of the same themes he had first explored some three decades before, Deichmann argued that *spolia* signified a clear break with classical building traditions.[24] In contrast to the older type of pragmatic utilization of materials gathered from abandoned buildings, this use of *spolia* enabled late Roman architects to explore a new aesthetic principle that encouraged the arrangement of columns and blocks in symmetrical pairs according to their shape and color. Such an argument challenged the traditional interpretation of reuse by calling into question the fundamental assumption that the goal of post-classical art and architecture was to imitate the classical past. Thus Deichmann played an instrumental role in demonstrating that whatever its causes, the use of *spolia* was not the clear evidence of decline it had once been held to represent.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these two works for the study of *spolia* over the last half century. By drawing attention to reuse as a practice that did not always imply artistic, political and social decline, Esch and Deichmann helped to initiate a field of academic inquiry that has grown at a stunning pace ever since. Moreover, in demonstrating that spoliation was a widespread phenomenon that could be interpreted in a variety of ways, these pioneers brought to an end the type of all-encompassing analysis that their studies represent. Instead, the exploration of *spolia* today is characterized by a degree of regional and chronological specialization that defies any attempt to chart a linear history of developments in the field. At the same time though, in spite of the growing variety of approaches to *spolia*, it is difficult to identify an interpretation or example of reuse in the recent scholarship that was not first presented in these two seminal works. Thus in place of a careful analysis of each contribution, an identification of recent trends and advances in the scholarship may suffice.

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22 Esch 1969, 44.

23 Deichmann 1975.

24 Deichmann 1940.

Utility

Whether they have argued for it as the sole reason for reuse or at the very least acknowledged its existence before moving on to a more sophisticated analysis, nearly all who have studied the matter have stated that basic utility and economy played a role in the use of *spolia*.[25] It is commonly suggested that it is far easier to reuse material originally shaped for another purpose than to produce something entirely anew. While this interpretation applies as much to gems and statues as to whole buildings, explanations that point to economical behavior are usually applied to architecture in large urban centers where it is assumed that monuments regularly fell into a state of disrepair and were salvaged for building material.[26] Arguably, the practice of quarrying buildings for *spolia* became even more widespread with the contraction of civic space in the later Roman and Byzantine periods.[27]

Yet it is not just that Roman builders were suddenly provided with a less labor-intensive supply of construction material. The associated study of the Roman marble trade suggests that the imperial development of extensive networks for the transport of exotic marbles likely prepared the way for a turn to *spolia* as well.[28] Studies have suggested that the increase in production at quarries around the Mediterranean should be associated with the stockpiling of building supplies. From this point of view, the transition from newly quarried materials to the recycled remains of older structures was but a natural step in the evolution of the building industry.[29]

Aesthetics

While it is certainly the case that the desire to build as quickly and efficiently as possible was always an issue of great concern to builders throughout antiq-

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25 Some of the clearer statements to this effect can be found in Esch 1969, 5; Deichmann 1975, 4; Holloway 1985, 262 and Papalexandrou 2003, 57.

26 Deichmann 1940, 114–116; Brandenburg 2011.

27 Saradi-Mendelovici 1988; Sodini 1993; Spieser 2001; Saradi 2006.

28 Esch 1969, 13; Fant 1988, Ward-Perkins 1992; Fant 1993; Pensabene 1998; 2000; Sodini 2002; Pensabene 2008; Greenhalgh 2009.

29 Esch 1969, 1, 5, 13; Deichmann 1940, 121; 1975, 24, 52, 97; Pensabene 2000; Brandenburg 2011; Russell 2013a, 201–255. Lukaszewicz 1979 reports on the intriguing evidence of what appears to have been an inventory of architectural elements that were being recycled while Wohl 2001 mentions a similar inventory of material made at the time of the reconstruction of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. The accounts of shipwreck discoveries and nautical surveys also report on the transportation of prefabricated and potentially even recycled building materials. See Dworakowska 1983; Beykan 1988; Pulak and Rogers 1994; Russell 2012; 2013a, 110–140 and 2013b.

uity, numerous studies have argued that the use of *spolia* may not have been governed purely by economic necessity. For example, it has been noted that the ambitious building programs in Rome and Constantinople in the fourth century A.D. do not give the impression of an empire in extreme financial difficulty.[30] Moreover, many of the earliest examples of *spolia* do not show any signs of having been used reluctantly or in a way intended to hide their earlier function.[31] Yet on an even more practical level, it remains to be demonstrated that constructing a unified monument from a supply of disparate building materials actually requires less effort than quarrying and carving them anew.[32] As a result, many have suggested alternative explanations that go beyond the basic idea of economy of use.

It is important to note that throughout antiquity there continued to be an appreciation of the inherent beauty of statues, marble, gemstones, or other precious materials that ensured that such items would be used over and again.[33] At the same time though, many studies of *spolia* have sought to explore the way in which the move toward reuse went hand in hand with the development of aesthetic goals that were different from those of the classical past. Deichmann's presentation of the pairing principle has been complemented by additional research focused on the organization of *spolia* in a religious setting. Some have demonstrated that the alternation of capital types offered subtle visual cues concerning the division of space within the Christian church.[34] Others have argued that, beyond this loose organizational structure, the differences in size, shape, and color commonly seen in the use of *spolia* gave monuments a lively visual effect that was becoming increasingly popular in late antiquity.[35] Most interesting in this regard are the reports that some of the building materials once thought to be *spolia* were actually carved at the time of construction.[36] It is not entirely clear whether this was the result of sculptors attempting to imitate the look of *spolia* or whether such variety of shape and style represents an entirely new manner of viewing that was simply less concerned with the specific details of a structure. But it does seem to be the case that later Roman and medieval builders worked to achieve a level of variety in their monuments that differed markedly from the uniformity of the classical past.

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30 Brenk 1987, 104–105.
31 Fabricius Hansen 2003, 17.
32 Brenk 1987, 106; Brenk 1996, 64; Saradi 1997, 399; Dey 2012, 298–307.
33 Greenhalgh 1989; Raff 1994; Kinney 2006; Greenhalgh 2009; Kinney 2011b; Greenhalgh 2012.
34 Onians 1988; Brandenburg 1996.
35 Brenk 1987; 1996; Saradi 1997, 396.
36 Brandenburg 1996, 2011.

Ideology / Symbolism

Beyond exploring its intended aesthetic effect, some have argued that the prominent use of *spolia* is largely due to its ability to function as a visual reference to a specific time and place. According to this explanation, such materials were displayed so that the viewer was encouraged to make a direct association between some aspect of the circumstances surrounding the object's first and second uses.[37] Thus, the careful arrangement of *spolia* in monuments such as the Arch of Constantine or Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel may have been intended to serve as imperial propaganda by encouraging the viewer to place the new ruler in line with the famous emperors of the past.[38] Likewise, the reused columns and capitals that line the interiors of some Christian churches may have been utilized because they referred to a specific monument in the pre-Christian era that had been made to serve the victorious religion.[39] In this respect, it is not entirely out of the question that certain reused objects were thought to possess supernatural power that could be redirected toward a new purpose.[40]

At the same time, others have argued that the meaningful use of *spolia* may have functioned in a more general fashion that did not depend upon an exact, or even correct, understanding of the original function of the *spolia*. Thus, inscriptions, sculpted reliefs, or even recognizable architectural members inserted into buildings in the wrong location and orientation or altered in some other fashion could have served a symbolic function, even if the original use of these pieces was disregarded or misunderstood in a secondary context.[41] Such an interpretation forms the core of R. Krautheimer's argument that the use of *spolia* in certain churches in Rome erected under Pope Sixtus III, who led the Catholic Church from A.D. 432–440, represented an effort to evoke the classical past without directly associating with its pagan traditions.[42] Perhaps even more abstractly, as M. Fabricius Hansen has suggested, the appearance of collections of *spolia* in churches not only mirrored the practice of reassembling fragments of the literary past to serve the Christian present but also functioned

37 Brilliant 1982; Cutler 1999; Liverani 2011.

38 L'Orange and von Gerkan 1939; Peirce 1989; Elsner 2000; Kinney 2001. On the other hand, Liverani (2011) urges caution in making associations of this type.

39 Deichmann 1975, 54–60; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 54–55; Marinescu 1996; Saradi 1997, 401–405.

40 James 1996; Saradi 1997; Maguire 1998.

41 Kinney 1996; Coates-Stephens 2002; Papalexandrou 2003; Liverani 2011.

42 Krautheimer 1961; 1980.

to reinforce and further develop the Christian understanding of the physical world as a screen that hid deeper spiritual truths.[43]

Perception

These wide-ranging discussions of the pragmatic, ideological and aesthetic motivations for the use of *spolia* have inevitably led to questions about our scholarly assumptions concerning the ancient viewer. It has been noted that use of *spolia* developed into a popular practice in relative silence. For aside from passing references found in various letters and orations, there is only the evidence of the late Roman law codes, which are commonly interpreted as proof of a general concern with an architectural practice that had started to make the appearance of Roman cities indistinguishable from that of a defeated foe.[44] However, even this evidence has been called into question by some who hold that these prohibitions against the stripping of buildings are instead part of a much longer history of imperial efforts to regulate and control the supply of building materials, as was the case with the marble trade.[45]

Thus, as D. Kinney has cautioned on a number of occasions, we must be careful in assuming that ancient perceptions of *spolia* were similar to our own.[46] On a most basic level, it is necessary to acknowledge that the ancient viewers likely did not share our ability or even our interest in studying *spolia* in careful detail over lengthy periods of time in museums or atop ladders and scaffolding. Nor did they employ the types of structured theoretical and formal analyses commonly used in the study of reuse today.[47] Even more significantly, it is not entirely certain that ancient viewers would have seen this form of reuse as a stark departure from traditions of the past. Recent research has uncovered progressively earlier examples of reuse so that it now appears that the monuments erected under the rule of Constantine may well have been following a tradition that began in the third century A.D. or perhaps even earlier.[48]

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43 Fabricius Hansen 2003.

44 Baldini Lippolis 2007, 219–224. See pp. 10–12 above.

45 Lukaszewicz 1979; Geyer 1993; Alchermes 1994. On the topic of reuse as a type of "new" architecture or even as an arena for public competition with projects sponsored by the emperor, see Cuomo 2007, 145 and Kalas 2010.

46 Kinney 1995; 1997; 2001; 2011a. See also Moralee 2006 and Liverani 2011.

47 See Brilliant's (1982) differentiation between *spolia in se* and *spolia in re* or Liverani's (2011) discussion of *spolia I* and *spolia II*. Both of these approaches are immensely helpful to us today, but it is unclear whether they faithfully reflect ancient perceptions of reuse. See Cutler 1999; Coates-Stephens 2002 and Dey 2012.

48 Brenk 1996; Kinney 1997; Frey 2015.

Yet even if ancient viewers did stop to ponder the possible meaning behind the use of *spolia*, there is no guarantee that they would have automatically discerned what we now presume to have been the intended message. Given the number of examples in which a monument or object was preserved because of an erroneous identification or an *interpretatio christiana*, it is quite possible that ancient viewers simply missed the point.[49] As Kinney has noted, there is very little to distinguish the positive act of recarving a relief portrait as a sign of honor from *damnatio memoriae*—the punitive act of erasing an individual from public memory.[50] Likewise, it is by no means assured that all those who witnessed the use of temple blocks or classical reliefs in the walls of a church or civic structure would have automatically assumed that they possessed supernatural powers. Nor is it certain that, if they did hold such beliefs, those individuals were convinced that the spirits contained within had been converted or controlled. Such potential misreadings illustrate the fact that there are always three parties involved in our interpretations of *spolia*: those who created the work for a certain purpose, those who lived in its presence, and those of us today who attempt to understand the intended effect of either one upon the other.

Defining *Spolia*

A recognition of the ways in which we may unknowingly shape the very subject we are attempting to understand points to what remains one of the most enduring and significant aspects of *spolia* studies over the past half-century. In spite of a strong sense of self-awareness and introspection, and regardless of the variety of approaches that they have adopted, those who study *spolia* continue to struggle with a general inability to define and delimit the special class of reused objects upon which they are focused. The resulting ambiguity has always pulled the field in two opposite directions.

On the one hand, there are those who have tried to expand the category of *spolia* to include an ever-widening variety of materials, monuments, and periods of time.[51] This was doubtless the goal of Esch's pioneering study and the aim of many other investigations that have followed in his footsteps. Through their work we are encouraged to be open to the possibility that nearly any form

49 James 1996, 13; Saradi 1997, 403–404.

50 Kinney 1995.

51 Brilliant and Kinney 2011.

of reuse can be meaningful and therefore worthy of our attention. Moreover, we are encouraged to see that aesthetic, ideological and practical motivations are not mutually exclusive and may have together played a role in the final appearance of an object or monument.[52]

On the other hand, there are those who have attempted to define the topic of *spolia* more strictly. Traditionally, such projects take a form similar to Deichmann's survey, which considers a remarkably large number of examples that nevertheless fit within a narrowly defined category of "aesthetically effective" reuse.[53] Studies in this tradition not only seek to limit the types of reuse that should be considered but also insist upon clearly and directly observable material evidence in support of any conclusions regarding the significance or intended message of spoliation.[54]

In the end, this longstanding inability to reach a commonly accepted definition has much to do with the fact that it has always been an action and not a specific set of physical characteristics that serve to make objects into *spolia*. It is a simple yet critical fact that, regardless of whether they have adopted a more or less restricted approach, nearly all of these studies continue to follow the Renaissance tradition of identifying *spolia* as objects within a unique typological category. Yet, there is actually nothing about these objects' shape, size, material, or color that distinguishes them as *spolia*. For example, there is no inherent difference between a column from a temple colonnade later reused in a church and one left undisturbed in its original location. If both were removed from their architectural context, we would be hard pressed to determine which was the *spolium*.

The way we have defined and discussed this unique form of reuse has always shown this to be the case. In the few ancient Greek and Roman sources that mention instances of reuse—perhaps an indication not of the rarity, but of the ubiquity of the practice—a reused column or other architectural member is simply given an additional description such as "worked" or "renewed." This practice of discussing an action and not an object has continued to this day. Indeed, most studies published over the past half century begin by stating that *spolia* are unique objects but quickly switch to discussing *spoliation* as an architectural or artistic practice. This is everywhere in evidence, from Deichmann's and Esch's early use of expressions such as "die Wiederverwendung" "das Einfu-

52 Saradi-Mendelovici 1990; Cutler 1999; Ward-Perkins 1999; Coates-Stephens 2003; Fabricius Hansen 2003; Leggio 2003; Dey 2012.

53 Deichmann 1975, 4.

54 Greenhalgh 2011.

gen," and "der Brauch," to more recent discussions of whether certain examples of *spolia* represent "reuse," "recycling" or "appropriation."[55]

This is not to say that "things reused" is invalid as a category of study. Indeed, as expressions such as "sacred," "secular," and "domestic," clearly show, we commonly classify objects according to the manner of their use. At the same time though, the decision of whether or not to place an object within such commonly understood, yet imprecisely defined categories is more accurately a reflection of our own contemporary ideas and concerns. The problem becomes even more acute when expressions such as "aesthetically effective" or "meaningful" are made an essential part of the definition. For example, we would commonly recognize that "all things used in a way that is religiously meaningful" is simply too large, too subjective and too loosely defined to permit any effective analysis. Instead, we typically focus upon smaller subcategories that can be defined according to a set of absolute material, chronological, or geographic limits—Doric temples, Byzantine icons, Islamic manuscripts—as more manageable and potentially informative units of study.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that in limiting the examples of reuse they consider to a specific place (typically Rome), a certain time (usually late antiquity), type of artifact (normally columns and capitals) or monument (far too frequently, the Arch of Constantine), those who have made significant contributions to the study of *spolia* have tacitly acknowledged the fact that "all things reused in an aesthetically effective or meaningful way" is not useful as a category of analysis. It should also be clear by this point that if the field of *spolia* studies is to advance along its current scholarly trajectory, it must be preceded by a more methodologically explicit development of an objective set of clearly defined criteria. Actually, in order to be most effective, those criteria should also allow for other forms of reuse that are not commonly interpreted as aesthetically motivated or charged with meaning.[56] For it is only in contrast to non-meaningful use, or even outright rejection, that specific examples of reuse gain the status of *spolia*. Such an approach would not only help to reveal the often unspoken rationales that lie behind our identifications of *spolia*, but would also draw attention to instances of intentional non-display as equally informative examples of reuse.[57] In other words, studies of why certain objects

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55 Brilliant 1982; Kinney 2001; Liverani 2011.

56 Underwood (2013) has not only voiced a similar concern, but suggests through his "test case" study at Ostia an approach to *spolia* that is similar in many ways to the one offered here.

57 For example, it is only when seen from the rear that the blocks used in the third century A.D. repair of the propylon of the Porticus Octaviae in Rome can be recognized as *spolia*

and materials were not prominently displayed can often be just as effective as studies of similar objects that were.

Yet, the distinction between *spolia* as objects and spoliation as action suggests that a different approach—one that concentrates on the many different stages in the process of reuse—holds great potential in exploring the phenomenon. One must recognize that, in studying *spolia*, we are not examining objects as much as we are attempting to identify the less tangible and potentially much more informative evidence of an individual's interaction with them. Thus, it is not sufficient to classify an example of reuse according to its material, date, style or location. Rather, it is essential that one gain a more complete understanding of the function of that spoliated object in both its primary and secondary contexts. Additional questions then become essential. What was the *spolium* originally intended to do? How did it become available for reuse? Who reused it? How did they go about reusing it? What other materials were used in the same work? What relationship does the *spolium* have to those other objects around it? Only by asking such questions are we likely to gain a better sense of the meaning that the material past may have held for the patrons and builders who interacted with it.

An Agency Approach

In adopting an approach to the study of *spolia* that focuses more on reused objects as evidence of past activity, we would do well to make the fullest use of advances in the ongoing exploration of agency theory in the fields of anthropology and art history. First developed by social theorists in the 1970s and 1980s in an effort to explore the role of individual action within large-scale social systems, the concept of agency has been so rapidly and widely adopted by the scholarly community that, as in the case of the study of *spolia*, it is difficult to keep track of its many uses and adaptations.[58] At a most basic level though, an agency approach recognizes individuals "… as socially embedded, imperfect, and often impractical people. Agency theorists also talk of a much more interactive (or dialectic) relationship between the structures in which agents exist

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(Gorrie 2007; Koortbojian 2011, 156–162; Dey 2012, 294). Such "hidden" reuse has not been the subject of careful study, perhaps due to the influence of Deichmann, who only mentions such examples as a counterpoint to his more limited definition of *spolia* as "Ornament- und Profilträger," (1975, 3–5).

58 Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Giddens 1984. Art historians, such as Gell (1998) and Osborne and Tanner (2007) have taken a different approach than the one adopted here.

and, paradoxically, which they create."[59] For anthropologists, this concept of agency is especially attractive because it provides an alternative to the systemic models of human behavior that envision individuals as perfectly rational, all knowing, yet mindless actors. Moreover, in recognizing the potential of those at the lowest levels of society to effect change, agency theory provides an important alternative to the "big man" model that sees prominent leaders as the only individuals capable of effecting historically significant change. The connections to be drawn between the study of agency and that of the building process in antiquity are clear enough. Yet, for those interested in the phenomenon of reuse, the concept of agency should be particularly appealing for its potential to refocus our efforts back onto a number of important but frequently overlooked aspects of spoliation that would in turn demonstrate the relevance and informative potential of the evidence of reuse in studies of the architectural and social history of late antiquity in general. This is most apparent in the following ways.

Process

First, those who study agency are concerned with monuments and artifacts only insofar as they may redirect our attention away from general categories and linear developmental models and toward a contemplation of the numerous choices that individuals made in order to create the material world around them.[60] This shift in focus encourages us to recognize that any generative act involves a lengthy series of negotiations on the part of individuals with the social structures that dictate the way something "should" be or look. Thus, at each stage in a decision-making process, individuals depend upon cultural knowledge that inevitably varies according to their place in space and time.

This suggested change in focus has much in common with the recent shift in architectural studies toward a greater concentration on the details of ancient buildings as evidence of the processes and people responsible for their construction. Landmark studies focused upon the Markets and Column of Trajan, the Pantheon, the Baths of Caracalla, and the Flavian Amphitheater have shown that the erection of such works should be characterized as an ongoing negotiation between a theoretical architectural design and the physical reality of its implementation.[61] Just as today, building projects in antiquity always required unique solutions to problems specific to their particular design and

59 Dobres and Robb 2000, 4.

60 Martin 2005; Pauketat and Alt 2005.

61 DeLaine 1997; Lancaster 1998; 1999; Ousterhout 1999; Lancaster 2000; Shirley 2001; Taylor 2003; Wilson Jones 2003; Dey 2011; Taylor 2014.

location. The preparation of a construction site and the foundations of a building often required a great deal of time and careful consideration. The necessary materials, whether cut stone, bricks and tile, or lime for mortar, had to be prepared ahead of time in order to arrive at the work site in a steady and regular supply. Forests of lumber had to be provided for use as scaffolding, molds, cranes and even basic fuel for kilns and foundries. Most importantly of all, enormous numbers of skilled and unskilled laborers were needed to carry out the wide variety of tasks necessary to erect even the simplest of structures. Such immense complexity frequently resulted in mistakes that can be identified in the material remains of buildings still today. We are fortunate in this respect, for it is the evidence of unfinished or rejected materials and errors or adaptations in construction that provides the most informative insights into the building process. Just as the identification of spelling and grammatical errors in inscriptions or ancient manuscripts opens a window onto the actual use of language in the ancient world, so too does a careful "reading" of the architectural elements of a building inform us about the real world application of the designs and principles that are frequently discussed in more abstract analyses of Roman architecture.

For *spolia* studies, the need to follow this shift in focus is clear enough. All too often, in larger scale investigations of reuse, analyses jump from monument to monument in an effort to trace an apparent stylistic development (e.g., the use of variations in shape and color, classical revivals, or the ability to use uniform sets of columns) so that it almost seems as if the buildings have taken on lives of their own and are reproducing according to some overarching plan. Yet, the actual means by which these styles and ideas were generated and transmitted is explored, if at all, in only the most general terms. This is a curious oversight, for by their very nature, *spolia* are some of the most intimate, yet accessible instances of a negotiation with the building traditions of the past. It is important always to remember that, unlike the use of materials carved according to a pre-determined set of dimensions and uniformly provided in a steady supply from a quarry, the utilization of *spolia* meant that each stone had to be selected from a limited supply of material cut and shaped for a prior use and then set into place in keeping with the structural, aesthetic, and symbolic needs of a different project. Thus, if studied in its secondary context and in sufficiently careful detail, each of these blocks reveals an individual's decision to conform to, adapt, or reject aspects of its prior appearance and manner of use. While this can be seen most easily in the case of the columns, sculptures and inscriptions that remain the most popular objects of interest in the study of *spolia*, it should be recognized that every architectural element exhibited some sign of its prior "proper" use and was therefore a potential point of negotiation

with the traditions of the past. On the other hand, once a monument built with *spolia* was completed, the architectural decisions it embodied immediately became visible points of reference for all subsequent works created by builders and architects.[62]

The Common Builder

Secondly, the focus on practice and process seen in an agency approach also encourages the study of the important role played by individuals and groups at the lowest levels of society in creating these objects and monuments.[63] T. Pauketat cautions that while centralization of power is a prerequisite to monumental construction,

> … the theoretical problem with any such scenario is its failure to consider the effects of non-elite practice in social change. The common masses built the monuments and, unless we assume that they were duped, were continuously coerced, or were without dispositions, then we must admit the possibility that their dispositions in some way shaped monumental constructions.[64]

Thus, as evidence of collective activity on a local scale, and as an expression of common social traditions, objects and monuments hold untapped potential to inform us about the attitudes of the individuals and groups that created them, but who nevertheless go unrecognized in the historical record.

At first glance, it may seem overly optimistic to suggest that it is possible to speak in any detail about the impact of lower-level workers on the final appearance of monuments in the Roman and Byzantine periods. After all, there is general consensus among those who have studied the matter that the already scant written evidence concerning the Roman building industry is marked by a clear elite bias so that we are told far more about the patrons who sponsored projects than the architects and craftsmen they employed.[65] What little information there is concerning these trades during the Roman Republic diminishes incrementally with the growth of the imperial bureaucracy so that sources that present an emperor directly supervising a project come to outnumber discus-

62 On the agency of objects, see Gosden 2005.

63 Cobb and King 2005.

64 Pauketat 2000, 117.

65 Ousterhout 1999, 39–43; DeLaine 2000, 120–123; Taylor 2003, 9–12; Bouras 2005; Zanini 2006, 375–376; 2007, 382; Foschia 2009, 217; Anderson 2014, 127; Taylor 2014, 193.

sions of those who actually carried out the work on his behalf.[66] Worse still, the written sources are plagued by a general imprecision of terms for the different positions in the hierarchy of building professions, which change over time and come to lose any specificity they once had by the sixth century A.D. anyway.[67] Moreover, for smaller projects one individual might take on multiple roles or, in the case of a series of larger public works, we might find an individual serving in different capacities as he worked his way up through an architectural *cursus honorum*.[68] Thus, as B. Caraher has concluded, "… our understanding of building practices, the organization of labor, and the range of influences on architecture and decoration is more suggestive than definitive."[69] Nevertheless, it is possible to sketch out, in general terms at least, certain historical trends in the organization of the building industry, which, when studied in conjunction with the evidence of the monuments themselves, point to an increased influence of lower level agents on the final appearance of the built environment.

At the uppermost levels, it is possible to trace an overall trend toward the centralization of control over the construction of public monuments. While patrons in the later Roman period might still come from many different places—the church, local elites, or even community collectives—it was increasingly the case that the emperor himself or his provincial administrators initiated building projects. Even if they were not state initiatives, works that required public funds, involved the demolition of existing structures or called for the erection or repair of defensive walls required the approval of the emperor.[70] In all these cases, it is almost certain that an imperial official was assigned to supervise the work.[71] Over time, such officials came to replace the various civic magistrates who had once sponsored construction as a public liturgy, so that by the fifth century A.D. it was common to see individuals in the post of curator of public works serving as the supervisors of projects initiated by provincial governors.[72]

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66 Ousterhout 1999, 40–43; Lancaster 2000, 772; Taylor 2003, 13; Cuomo 2007, 162; Zanini 2007, 382; Anderson 2014, 133.

67 Ousterhout 1999, 52; Bouras 2002, 546–547; Cuomo 2007, 134; Zanini 2007, 394–395.

68 Zanini 2003, 219–220; Cuomo 2007, 142; Jacobs 2013, 497.

69 Caraher 2014, 49.

70 Zanini 2007, 384; Bakirtzis 2010, 360; Jacobs 2013, 480–490; Caraher 2014. Bouras (2002, 542–543) offers the intriguing suggestion that for many public projects, expensive construction equipment may have been provided by the state. For construction as a locus of negotiation between imperial authority and local initiative, see Kalas, 2010.

71 Ousterhout 1999, 49; Bouras 2002, 542; Taylor 2003, 13; Bakirtzis, 2005, 21; Jacobs 2013, 484.

72 Jacobs 2013, 480–490; Taylor 2014, 198. On changing traditions of public beneficence, see pp. 31–34 below.

Traditionally, the overall direction of a construction project was the work of an architect, who in the Republican period had been responsible for designing the building, procuring the required construction materials, and on some occasions inspecting the final product or personally organizing the workforce of skilled and unskilled laborers.[73] This position, which varied a great deal depending on the size and nature of the project, also seems to have been simplified and centralized in the later Roman and Byzantine periods. Again the evidence is less detailed than we might prefer, especially concerning the background and social status of architects, but for the majority of the Roman period, a distinction was made between those with practical "hands on" experience and those who possessed a more academic, theoretical understanding of their profession.[74] That this continued to be the case as late as the middle of the fourth century A.D., is shown by edicts of Constantine and Constantius preserved in the Theodosian Code, where, in an effort to bolster the number of skilled workers in the building professions, the emperors offered an exemption from compulsory public services for those who entered into training toward that end. Architects are mentioned in all three edicts, but in the two cases (*Cod. Theod.* 13.4.1 and 13.4.3) where this profession is discussed alone, or in conjunction with engineers and geometricians (*mechanicos et geometras*), their education is referred to as a "studium" to be taught and learned, presumably in an academic setting.[75] In the remaining edict (*Cod. Theod.* 13.4.2), however, the work of architects is placed in a list with carpenters, stone-masons, sculptors and other "artifices artium," in whose skills people should become more practiced ("peritiores") and should desire to pass on to "suos filios," arguably through direct experience rather than abstract education.[76]

73 Anderson 1997, 3–13; Lancaster 2000, 765; Taylor 2003, 14.

74 Downey 1948; Ousterhout 1999, 43; DeLaine 2000, 120; Jacobs 2013, 490–491; Anderson 2014, 131–133.

75 *Cod. Theod.* 13.4.1: Imp. Constantinus a. ad Felicem. Architectis quam plurimis opus est; sed quia non sunt, sublimitas tua in provinciis Africanis ad hoc studium eos impellat, qui ad annos ferme duodeviginti nati liberales litteras degustaverint. Quibus ut hoc gratum sit, tam ipsos quam eorum parentes ab his, quae personis iniungi solent, volumus esse inmunes ipsisque qui discent salarium competens statui. Proposita VI kal. sept. Karthagine Optato et Paulino conss. *Cod. Theod.* 13.4.3: Impp. Constantius et Constans aa. ad Leontium praefectum praetorio. Mechanicos et geometras et architectos, qui divisiones partium omnium incisionesque servant mensurisque et institutis operam fabricationi stringunt, et eos, qui aquarum inventos ductus et modos docili libratione ostendunt, in par studium docendi adque discendi nostro sermone perpellimus. Itaque inmunitatibus gaudeant et suscipiant docendos qui docere sufficiunt. Dat. prid. non. iul. Leontio et Sallustio cons.

76 *Cod. Theod.* 13.4.2: Idem a. ad Maximum praefectum praetorio. Artifices artium brevi

Yet by the sixth century A.D. the more theoretical aspect of this twofold approach to architecture is largely abandoned in favor of a more centralized system based on the use of models that were modified to suit local conditions.[77] According to E. Zanini,

> Literary and epigraphic sources suggest that there was not only an explicit imperial decision behind the founding of new cities and all the operations to restore the old cities or their walls during the 6th c., but there was also what today we would call a 'team of architects', charged with planning, designing and realising every project. The way in which interventions were carried out seems to have been repeated almost identically in each case and to have followed a sequence: the central decision; the overall plan drawn up by a pool of architects in Constantinople, based on very accurate information about the nature of the site; the actual realisation on-site of the works to be done, carried out either by the same architects or, more usually, by other, lower-ranking colleagues.[78]

Where some have seen this change as a loss of originality in Byzantine architecture, others have argued that the locus of creative innovation merely shifted from the moment a building was designed to the moment when pre-existing models and types of structures were adapted to meet local conditions.[79]

Arguably then, with this shift in the architectural process also came an increase in the significance and potential influence of the master builders, contractors and skilled craftsmen who engaged in the physical act of bringing these architectural models into existence. What little written evidence we have shows that during the Republic and early Empire, architects or even patrons commonly worked with a contractor who had the responsibility of gathering and organizing the necessary labor.[80] While it was customary at this early stage for these contractors to organize workers into crews that lasted only for the duration of the project, in the later Roman and Byzantine eras, teams of skilled craftsmen and the *collegia* to which they belonged began to

subdito comprehensarum per singulas civitates morantes ab universis muneribus vacare praecipimus, si quidem ediscendis artibus otium sit adcommodandum; quo magis cupiant et ipsi peritiores fieri et suos filios erudire. Dat. IIII non. aug. Feliciano et Titiano conss.

77 Ousterhout 1999, 43–44; Bouras 2002, 546–552; Anderson 2014, 135.

78 Zanini 2003, 218–219. See also Zanini 2007 and Jacobs 2013, 492.

79 Ousterhout 1995, 1999; Bouras 2002; 2005; Mihaljević 2012.

80 Brunt 1980, 83.

take on a more permanent identity.[81] It was through these increasingly formal arrangements that the actual skills of sculpting, brick laying and stone masonry were transmitted from worker to worker, so that over time, specific building styles come to distinguish the products of specific regions and crews.[82] The buildings and monuments themselves, which are only now beginning to be studied in sufficient detail to yield definitive results, speak most eloquently to this issue. Where in the past, the identification of different masonry styles in the fabric of single monuments had commonly been attributed to later repairs, these small points of discontinuity are now being interpreted as the contemporary work of individual crews.[83] This is most apparent along the course of fortifications where long stretches of walls, ostensibly erected at the same moment in time can be examined for points of discontinuity.[84] More interesting still are those regional surveys that have identified not only examples of monuments in two different geographic locations that follow similar plans but also techniques of construction.[85] Moreover, if the reports of "masons' marks" and graffiti drawn into wet mortar and plaster are to be believed, these distinct styles were even possibly points of pride among these migratory work crews.[86]

Finally, while the written evidence is simply not detailed enough to allow for any type of definitive conclusions, it is worth considering the role that unskilled laborers as well as those who (willingly or unwillingly) funded such construction projects might have played in affecting the overall look of monumental public architecture. P.A. Brunt has convincingly argued for the existence of a large supply of unskilled urban labor throughout the Roman period, so that

81 Ousterhout 1999, 49–57; Vryonis 1963. Sweetman 2001 charts a transition in the organization of mosaicists on Crete from itinerant workers in the second century A.D. to more permanent workshops in the third century A.D. For E. Zanini (2006, 379–382) the skilled work of the building trades as well as the legislation that sought to restrict and control it stands as the best evidence for the overall elevation in the importance and social status of skilled craftsmen more generally in the Byzantine period. On the role that Aurelian and the construction of the defenses of Rome might have played in the association of collegia and guilds with public works, see Dey 2011, 104–108.

82 Ousterhout 1999, 44; Baldini Lippolis 2007, 232; Valenzani 2007, 445; Zanini 2007, 396.

83 Ousterhout 1999, 57; Taylor 2014, 202.

84 Crow and Ricci 1997, 245; Bowden 2003, 99; DeStaebler 2008a, 294, 305, 309–310; Brasse 2010, 276; Dey 2010, 17; Allen 2012; 2013.

85 Ćurčić 2010, 213; Baumeister 2011, 244–245; Mihaljević 2012.

86 Sanders 2004, 176–178; Ćurčić 2010, 26; Caraher 2014, 49. On the increasing mobility of work crews, see Ousterhout 1999, 55–57; Bouras 2002, 549–554; Jacobs 2013, 494 and Taylor 2014, 199. On the presence of workers' graffiti at Isthmia, see below, pp. 172–173.

even in later Roman and Byzantine times, we must assume that menial tasks such as clearing the building site or preparing and transporting construction supplies were carried out by local workers for a daily wage.[87] Moreover, it was occasionally the case, especially with the construction of fortification walls, that soldiers, or even local inhabitants were pressed into service without pay.[88] The resulting mixture of skilled, migrant labor and unskilled workers accustomed to local building conditions and traditions, may also have fostered an environment of creative innovation, especially in circumstances where the reuse of monuments and materials was involved.[89]

In the end then, we must acknowledge that both the spread of new ideas and the maintenance of older traditions were as likely to take place at the lowest levels of a building project as they were to happen at the levels of theoretical architectural design. It is therefore curious that this avenue of inquiry has not been more popular among scholars in the past. Rather, when the actual laborers involved in a construction project have been considered, most studies have offered instead an abstract analysis based almost exclusively on the written evidence. Thus, discussions of those below the level of architect or contractor tend to center on the organization of *collegia*, the percentage of an urban population that worked as day laborers, or the question of whether builders were slaves, free-born or soldiers.[90] Even in the few notable cases where efforts have been made to estimate the numbers of individuals required

87 Brunt 1980. DeLaine (2000, 135–136) suggests that, next to the elite patrons who had initiated the work, lower status laborers would have benefitted the most by earning a daily wage from work on large-scale public projects.

88 Cassiodorus (*Variae* I.17 and V.9), Libanius *Oration* 50 as well as *Cod. Theod.* 11.16.4, 15.1.5, 15.1.7, 15.1.23 and 15.1.49 all refer to compulsory labor. See also Brunt 1980, 82; Fowden 1995, 551; Ousterhout 1999, 53; Bouras 2002, 544–545; and Bowden 2003, 99–101. On the other hand, Jacobs (2013, 495) suggests that unpaid labor may have been too much of a liability on most projects to be useful. Unfortunately, there has been little discussion of the role played by the army in civic construction and what exists is brief and contradictory. Some like Dey (2011, 97–99), see little evidence for the participation of the army, but in other cases such as Hadrian's Wall (Breeze and Dobson 1976) and the fortified cities of the eastern Roman frontier (Zanini 2007, 392–393), it seems certain that this was the case. Assuming the army was involved, we again are likely seeing a situation where there was a great deal of diversity in tradition and experience. See Taylor 2014, 200–201.

89 Bowden 2003, 141–144; Zanini 2007, 386, 398–399; Mihaljević 2012. Baldini Lippolis (2007, 232) suggests that the practice of widespread reuse may have led to specialists in dismantling buildings and in the use *spolia* working alongside traditional masons and craftsmen.

90 For attempts to determine the manpower requirements of construction projects see Kardulias 1995; DeLaine 1997; Shirley 2001; Bachrach 2010 and Taylor 2014, 203–206.

to complete a construction project, there is still a tendency to imagine these workers as mere parts of a machine, capable only of carrying out the patron's or architect's design with absolute precision. Yet it stands to reason that skilled and unskilled laborers below the level of master builders and architects must have had more autonomy on these projects than is usually assumed. Thus, we can and should pay closer attention to the actions of these individuals and the ways in which they shaped the overall finished look of a project.

This suggested change in focus is especially relevant in the case of *spolia* studies, where analyses of the artistic and political motivations of bishops and emperors far outnumber even a mention of craftsmen or workshops. More problematic still are those cases when the patron or architect cannot be identified and discussions of the aesthetic or ideological effect of an object or monument is usually assigned to an anonymous individual who is by his nature, an almost perfect manifestation of the thoughts and concerns of his time. To be sure, prominent individuals played an important role in the decision to use *spolia* in monuments, but given the available evidence for changes in the organization of the building industry, we should begin to place more emphasis on the potential influence of those at other levels in the hierarchy in terms of how exactly recycled materials were used. Actually, because *spolia* exhibit a lack of uniformity that encourages us to examine more carefully the unique decisions responsible for their final appearance, the study of reuse holds great promise in serving as an example to be followed in other studies of architectural practice more generally.

Transitional Moments

Third, even though individuals may never be completely cognizant of the ways in which their behaviors are shaped by society, this does not mean that they are incapable of recognizing certain traditions that they either support or wish to alter. This is most profoundly felt at moments of dramatic change, when societal norms may be in a transitional state, and the traditions that govern how things should be done are called into question.[91] In particular, episodes of "… abandonment and re-occupation provided acute historical moments of discriminatory agency where earlier dispositions could be critically evaluated, accepted, rejected, and modified."[92] These moments are particularly worth examining in careful detail because it is then that we often see references to shared traditions in the past expressed in an effort to ease the potentially disruptive transition.

91 Martin 2005; Cobb and King 2005.

92 Cobb and King 2005, 188.

Much of the discussion over *spolia* in the last half-century has been influenced by the fact that the phenomenon of reuse seems to grow at an unprecedented pace in the decades surrounding the reign of Constantine the Great. As a result, many of the preconceived notions of political, social and economic decline that appear in the traditional histories of the period have played an immensely influential role in the interpretation of reuse.[93] Yet, if we look more closely, it is possible to identify countless moments of transition that occurred at different levels of intensity throughout antiquity. From the restoration of a toppled statue, to the remodeling of a building, to the destruction or colonization of an entire city, the history of the Mediterranean world is filled with moments of change after which individuals are either forced or enabled to re-evaluate their social traditions. It is worth noting just how often the construction projects that follow these moments involve instances of reuse that should be seen as examples of spoliation. The Persian sack of Athens in the fifth century B.C. is followed by the reuse of column drums in the reconstruction of the acropolis walls.[94] The Roman re-founding of the city of Corinth is followed by the erection of a free-standing colonnade removed from the interior of the archaic temple.[95] The death of Nero and condemnation of his memory was followed by the reuse of his portraits and architectural remains in other contexts.[96] In all these instances, patrons, architects, sculptors and builders were each afforded some opportunity to determine for themselves which parts of their social traditions they would keep and which they would change.

Seen in this way the phenomenon of late antique spoliation becomes less a dramatic shift in architectural practice and more a matter of scale.[97] The third and fourth centuries A.D. saw a number of dramatic changes. The civil wars that brought about the end of the Tetrarchy, the creation of a new eastern capital, and the increasing threat of raids that stretched ever deeper into the center of a once secure empire are all remarkably disruptive events. Moreover, the political and religious reforms instituted under Diocletian and Constantine encouraged a slower, yet equally disruptive shift in the traditions of public beneficence that had been largely responsible for the preservation of the "classical" city. As has now been outlined in a number of studies, the move toward more centralized control of civic revenues and public duties that occurred at this time set in motion a chain of events that resulted in fewer incentives for

93 Jones 1966; Alchermes 1994, 167–168; Liebeschuetz 2001a.

94 Wycherley 1978, 106–108.

95 Frey 2015.

96 Varner 2004, 49–79.

97 Jacobs 2013, 286; Underwood 2013, 398, 405.

regional civic elites to sponsor the construction or repair of many forms of public architecture.[98] This can be seen not only in the archaeological record, but also in the increased number of imperial decrees that charge governors with the task of maintaining the urban image through the restoration of buildings and the prevention of demolition for the sake of retrieving architectural ornaments.[99]

To be sure, at this transitional moment, many structures fell victim to individuals' changing ideas about patronage and were left to decay or were demolished for building material. But the concurrent transition to a Christian Roman Empire made the upkeep of structures associated with Hellenic polytheism especially problematic.[100] In spite of their monumental appearance and central location in the urban fabric, temples suddenly fell out of favor as objects of public and private patronage.[101] Edicts recorded in the Theodosian Code trace a remarkably brief progression from the initial protection of temples in A.D. 346 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.3; 16.10.4), to the prohibition against entry into temples beginning in A.D. 391 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.11), to the use of architecture from demolished temples for maintaining roads, bridges and aqueducts in A.D. 397 (*Cod. Theod.* 15.1.36). This is followed soon after by conflicting edicts issued in A.D. 399 both supporting (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.16), and prohibiting (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.15; 16.10.18), the demolition of temples, leading to the A.D. 415 transfer of all temples into imperial hands (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.20), and ending with the A.D. 435 order that all remaining temples be destroyed (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.25).

Of course, such evidence must be tempered by the admission that imperial edicts were likely not universally enforced and that there was no one routinely followed process for "destroying" a temple.[102] Also, it is clear that the reuse of abandoned temples was a long and varied process that did not begin everywhere at the same moment. Yet, the prohibition against the primary use of an entire category of sacred architecture was an unprecedented event in the history of the classical world. As a result, temple complexes that had served as the

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98 Ward-Perkins 1998; Liebeschuetz 2001b; Bowden 2003, 53–56; Carrié 2005; Saradi 2006, 151–185; Kalas 2010, 24–32; Jacobs 2013, 480–490.

99 Geyer 1993; Alchermes 1994; Baldini Lippolis 2007; Jacobs 2013, 567–569.

100 Leaving aside active efforts to desecrate and destroy temples, it is likely that as a growing number of Christian bishops took on the responsibility of maintaining public monuments, these civic leaders would have been much less willing to direct limited resources at the preservation of a religious monument from the pre-Christian past.

101 According to Libanius (*Oration* 18.126), blocks from temples were already being used in construction of houses by the reign of the Emperor Julian.

102 Matthews 2000; Caseau 2004; Bayliss 2004, 8–64; Lavan 2006, 230–234; Emmel et al. 2008.

centers of religious practice for centuries fell into ruin. Moreover, because they were not well suited for use as Christian places of assembly, temples that could not serve a secular function frequently became sources of ready-made materials.[103]

Finally, edicts issued at the nearly the same point in time that called on cities to erect fortifications at their own expense (*Cod. Theod.* 15.1.34, A.D. 396; *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.49, A.D. 407 (408? 412?)) must have created an ideal opportunity for officials to clear away these abandoned monuments at the same time as they were forced to demolish those that stood in the way of the new urban defenses.[104] Seen in this way, the use of *spolia* would appear to have been less an act of desperate cannibalization of the urban fabric and more a creative and convenient way to achieve the positive goals of defending and maintaining an attractive urban environment. Whichever interpretation is preferred, it is clear that this period, with its shifts in the practice of public beneficence, religious identity and military necessity offered an unusually large number of moments of transition in which individuals were either enabled or required to examine critically their past traditions.

Unintended Results and Regional Variability

Fourth, an agency approach suggests that in these transitional moments, individuals and groups at the lowest levels of society do not always act rationally or in full comprehension of their present situation. These "… individuals might only have intended to perpetuate their limited understanding of tradition, but the outcomes of practice … might have diverged profoundly from these intentions and from some usual range of outcomes."[105] Therefore, they may act in ways that produce unintended results that nevertheless come to have an impact on subsequent social traditions. This element of unpredictability that helps to account for social change also functions spatially so that we should not expect the outcomes of processes in one location to be similar to those in another. This variability, which is often ignored in attempts to develop typologies of objects and monuments on a large scale, can be very useful in helping to identify which social traditions were shared among communities and which

103 On the treatment of temples in the Christian era, see Deichmann 1939; Spieser 1976; Hanson 1978; Caseau 1999; 2004; Bayliss 2004; Saradi 2006, 355–384; Baldini Lippolis 2007; Hahn et al. 2008; Foschia 2009; Kalas 2010, 29–37; Esch 2011, 14–15; Lavan and Mulryan 2011 and Jacobs 2013, 272–307. That buildings other than temples may also have been understood as sacred architecture, rendering them unsuitable for Christian use, see Caseau 1999, 26–28.

104 Christie 2001, 118–119; Bakirtzis 2005, 17; Dey 2010, 18; 2011, 72–87; Jacobs 2013, 587.

105 Pauketat 2000, 116.

are the result of a sense of local identity. According to M. Owoc, "[c]onsiderable variability amongst general site similarities … evidences the operation of agency as a relational and collective force central to the contingent construction of locally shared social/symbolic perceptions, community identity, and definition."[106] Thus, it is only through the careful documentation of several examples of a particular type of object or monument that we can begin to come to a fuller understanding of the processes, individuals and social traditions responsible for its final appearance.

While ancient misinterpretations of *spolia* have been a common subject in the study of reuse, the possibility that a finished monument or object may not have been the intended result of the building project is rarely considered. Yet, given the inconsistency inherent in the supply of recycled materials, the types of unintended results and *ad hoc* solutions that are now being discussed by architectural historians would likely have been even more common than in earlier eras. From this point of view, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which an increasingly accessible supply of *spolia* presents a moment of change for patrons, architects, and especially builders at the lowest levels of the project who respond with a mixture of innovative and traditional approaches to the problems that are unique to their own setting in place and time. Such experimentation with the new possibilities of working with *spolia* produces a variety of results—both intended and unintended—that in turn serve to shape the practices of individuals in subsequent projects.

To date, most studies of *spolia* have not followed a methodology that would allow for a clear understanding of the ways in which reuse practices may have varied between regions or even specific locations. Scholars have engaged in either an intensive but isolated study of the details of a particular monument or a less detailed survey of numerous examples of reuse in an effort to detect regional differences or developmental sequences. In the first case, the lack of comparative examples fails to demonstrate which aspects of the monument under study are truly unique and which may be part of larger regional or historical trends. In the second case, there is a tendency to focus on a couple of isolated details of construction as if they are representative of the whole structure or even the whole region, ignoring in the process the evidence for the role of the individual builder in bringing that structure into existence. What is needed for an effective agency approach to the use of *spolia* is a comparative study of several carefully documented examples that can speak to both the larger trends of reuse and the unique details of a monument or object that may be locally determined.

106 Owoc 2005, 258.

Fortifications

Finally, because societies exist within a built environment, an agency approach draws attention to the ways in which the monuments and objects themselves help to shape the actions of the individuals who interact with them. As C. Cobb and A. King have noted, "[p]laces are a product of human action, but they also galvanize action in response to the memories and histories evoked by architecture and locations in the landscape."[107] As a result of the actions of numerous individuals at different levels of society, buildings are the manifestation of a negotiated collective social identity at a particular moment in time. Yet, it is not simply that they are able to speak to us today as evidence for the actions and ideas of their creators. Rather, these monuments have always spoken to those who have moved within and around them throughout the centuries.

It is readily apparent that the use of *spolia* represents one of the clearest demonstrations of the potential influence of the built environment upon the individuals. From the demolition of older structures, to the sorting of their constituent parts, to the use of specific materials in building a new monument, each stage of the process of reuse involves not just an evaluation, but a physical interaction with the architecture of the past. What is more, the monuments that were created in the process came to serve both as models for future architectural works as well as the backdrop of all subsequent social activity.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of the many fortification walls that were constructed in the later Roman and early Byzantine periods. It is now commonly accepted that beginning in the third century A.D., urban centers that under the *pax romana* had no need of walls began again to erect large numbers of defensive works throughout the Mediterranean.[108] However,

107 Cobb and King 2005, 170.

108 Well-known examples of cities walled at this time are Rome, Athens and Thessalonica. See Dey 2011; Travlos 1988; Bakirtzis 2005 and Rizos 2011. It is worth noting, however, that more recent work at other locations throughout the Mediterranean has shown that this initial phase of fortification was not a universal phenomenon. It now appears that unlike many cities in the west, which were fortified in the third and fifth centuries A.D. (Christie 1991; 2001; Dey 2010; 2011, 119–132; 2012; Sarantis and Christie 2013), the Danube frontier was fortified in the late third to late fourth century A.D. and again in the late fifth to late sixth centuries A.D. (Sarantis 2013, 319–321), while the fortification of cities in Asia Minor took place in the fourth to sixth and seventh to eighth centuries A.D. (Niewöhner 2010; 2011). There is still little consensus on the date of fortification campaigns in the Balkans. Ćurčić

in spite of their ubiquity and frequent use of *spolia* in construction, these fortifications are rarely mentioned in discussions of meaningful reuse. At present, I know of no study of *spolia* that has focused upon the evidence of defensive walls in as thorough and careful a manner as we see with the religious monuments of Christian Rome.[109]

It is likely that this consistent omission of fortifications is due to a much larger academic tradition that has seen defensive works as purely utilitarian and therefore unable to speak to larger questions of aesthetics, religious sentiment or civic identity.[110] Thus, for many decades, the community of specialists who examined these monuments were almost solely focused on developing large-scale regional and chronological schemes that attempted to trace the development of defensive techniques in general. With a remarkable consistency, the older literature on fortifications of the Greek, Roman and Byzantine eras concentrated on the size and shape of the enclosure wall, the number and dimensions of the gates and the shape and degree of projection of the towers.[111] Any changes in overall layout were usually attributed to new military tactics or technological developments such as catapult size and range. Rarely were defensive walls extensively studied in elevation and the style of construction was simply categorized according to the materials used rather than described in careful detail. If mentioned at all, most differences in building style within the same fortification were attributed to later repairs, or on rare occasions, inconsistencies in practice among work crews. Most importantly for the present study, when they did appear in the discussion, recycled materials—most notably, sculptures or inscriptions—were considered only insofar as they might pro-

(2010, 17–18) gives a date in the third century A.D., while Sarantis (2013, 319) suggests the fourth to sixth centuries A.D. and Jacobs (2013, 106) the second half of the fifth century A.D. Walls away from the borders of the empire are often more generally listed as works of the fifth century A.D. See Bowden 2003, 87; Jacobs 2013, 22 and Sarantis 2013, 320.

109 Blagg 1983 and Greenhalgh 1999 offer important demonstrations of the potential of this source of evidence, but both studies lack the detail we see in the analysis of *spolia* use in churches and monuments like the Arch of Constantine. Deichmann's survey of *spolia* (1975, 81–88) also touches on the evidence of fortifications in North Africa, but his examples are discussed only as further demonstration of conclusions already drawn in the study of churches in Italy and Asia Minor.

110 This observation has been expressed in several studies, going back to Ward-Perkins' (1984, 191) and Gregory's (1982a; 1987; 1992) earlier calls for attention to fortifications. Similar, yet more recent calls for action can be found in Gregory 2000, 109; Christie 2001, 105; Crow 2013, 422 and Jacobs 2013, 19.

111 Von Petrikovits 1971; Pringle 1981, 131–166; Johnson 1983a; Lander 1984; Foss and Winfield 1986.

vide a secure date of construction for a fortification as a whole. Regrettably, in many cases, these more esteemed artifacts were eventually removed from the walls and placed in museums and storehouses where they can no longer fully speak to either their primary or secondary phases of use.

This is not to say that such a tradition is misguided or useless. After all, at a most basic level, a defensive wall is supposed to protect against attack, and understanding the strategy and tactics that governed the construction of fortifications over time is critical to a better comprehension of the history of the ancient world. Yet those who have considered the issue more carefully have begun to conclude that the details of construction argue against the idea that these massive works with their carefully arranged brick and ashlar façades were erected purely in response to the practical defensive needs of their builders.[112] Rather, it is far more likely the case that these walls were built in the aftermath of attacks, and followed the same careful process of construction as any other major civic structure. This is an important point, for when we place defensive works back into the context of large scale building projects alongside baths, basilicas, aqueducts and the like, we are again able to see that it is not only possible, but to be expected that fortifications served more than a single basic functional role.[113] In G. Fowden's words, "[the] study of late Roman defensive walls has implications for our understanding of late Roman aesthetics, in which what we see as a loss of craftsmanship may well have aesthetic as well as material causes, in which the use of *spolia* was not just a response to a declining economy and the barbarian threat, and so on."[114]

Indeed, the idea that fortifications were also designed and erected in order to impress and intimidate friend and enemy alike has begun to receive much more attention than it has in the past, especially among studies of examples from the eastern Mediterranean.[115] With increasing frequency, scholars are calling attention to the fact that, regardless of their actual ability to withstand an

112 Gregory 1979, 270; 1982a; Johnson 1983a, 116; Greenhalgh 1999, 28; Christie 2001, 118; Crow 2001, 104; DeStaebler, 2008a, 285; Dey 2010, 36; Latimer 2010, 39; Dey 2011, 121–124; Jacobs 2013, 20.

113 The individual studies in Lorentzen et al. 2010 stand as an excellent illustration of this change in sentiment.

114 Fowden 1990, 495.

115 Gregory 1993; Crow and Ricci 1997; Crow 2001; Bowden 2003, 85–103; Bakirtzis 2005; Crow 2007; DeStaebler 2008a; Niewöhner et al. 2008; Bakirtzis 2010; Niewöhner 2010; Bakirtzis 2012; Jacobs 2013, 19–110. Christie 2001; Dey 2010; Latimer 2010 and Dey 2010; 2011; 2012 should be mentioned as particularly important studies of contemporary evidence in the West.

attack, defensive walls often became a distinguishing characteristic of major urban centers and in many cases became a symbol of the city itself.[116] This unique identity was often celebrated on a city's coinage or in mosaics and manuscripts where, in the economical visual language of the medium, walls appear next to other distinguishing architecture or individuals.[117] Arguably, the walls were even more important than these images would suggest, as the presence of fortifications was a mark of civic status and a source of pride, especially in an environment of intra-urban rivalry.[118] Inasmuch as the erection of walls required imperial approval, typically granted through the regional governor, the (re)construction of fortifications also provided an opportunity for the emperor and his agents to win public favor, as is seen in inscriptions and other written expressions of public gratitude.[119] Such acts of beneficence gave fortifications equal status with the many churches that were being built at the same time. This point has been clearly demonstrated in Saradi's analysis of the highly structured rhetorical tradition of speeches delivered in praise of ancient cities. She notes that, "while Byzantine encomia of cities in the later centuries follow the traditional rhetorical clichés, two elements underlying the medieval character of the urban centers become central in such praises: the *kallos* of the churches and the *kallos* and the strength of the fortifications."[120]

In fact, it is reasonable to assume that this later evidence reflects a much longer tradition in which aesthetic concerns played a significant role in the final appearance of fortification walls.[121] In stating that a city's walls "are an adornment in a time of peace and a precaution in a time of war," Cassiodorus (*Variae* I.xxviii) was merely recalling a sentiment expressed by Aristotle (*Politics* VII.11 1331a 12) nearly nine centuries earlier. According to R. Scranton,

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116 Greenhalgh 1999, 7; Bachrach 2000, 192; Christie 2001, 107–109; Bowden 2003, 102; Bakirtzis 2005; 2010; Niewöhner 2011, 118–119; Bakirtzis 2012; Jacobs 2013, 93. It is remarkable just how reminiscent this argument, which begins with an admission of practicality but proceeds to a consideration of other inspirations and outcomes, is of the arguments in favor of the more open interpretation of *spolia*.

117 Ehrensperger-Katz 1969; Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 40–50; Foss and Winfield 1986, 129; Bakirtzis 2005, 25; Saradi 2006, 120, 127, 136; Dey 2010, 35–36; 2011, 146; Jacobs 2013, 32–33, 93.

118 Saradi 2006, 85; DeStaebler 2008a, 286, 315–318; Brasse 2010, 280; Latimer 2010; Niewöhner 2010; Dey 2011, 116.

119 Johnson 1983a, 11; Gregory 1997, 48, 92–93; Zanini 2003, 218–220; Saradi 2006, 73, 82; Bowden 2006, 280; Dey 2010, 10.

120 Saradi 1995, 47. See also, Zanini 2003, 199–200; Saradi 2006, 73–74, 95; Bakirtzis 2010, 363–364 and Jacobs 2013, 4, 19.

121 Winter 1971, 84–87; Lawrence 1979, 239.

> … there are not infrequent references to city walls, from the standpoint of appearance, in Pausanias and other writers. That it could have been otherwise is difficult to believe. The Greeks were always proud of the beauty of the public buildings in their cities; they could scarcely have been oblivious to the fortifications. As a traveler approached a city from distant lands, apart from the grave monuments along the road his first view would be that of the encircling fortifications.[122]

Recent studies of the monumental walls in a number of eastern cities provide the best proof of this point.[123] It is often the case that the exterior faces of fortifications exhibit a greater care in construction than the inner façades, especially near gates where the defenses were most commonly seen.[124] This may take the form of ashlars that have been carefully arranged in sequences of headers and stretchers, laid in a "pseudo-isodomic pattern" or placed in alternating courses with stones and bricks of contrasting colors.[125] Where in some locations, it appears that ashlars have been intentionally oriented and finished to produce a smooth exterior surface, in other places, sculpture and inscriptions have been prominently displayed and have been interpreted as serving an apotropaic function.[126]

In spite of this evidence, it is all too often the case that scholars engage in a *post facto* analysis of the success or failure of a defensive work or technique based on a specific battle or siege, but fail to consider the number of times throughout history that the very appearance of a well-built fortification may have served as an effective deterrent to invasion or attack.[127] Moreover, such strict strategic analyses often fail to consider the effect that the very act of building a fortification wall, supplying the materials for its construction, or simply allowing such a work to be erected had upon the residents of a city or

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122 Scranton 1941, 14. For discussions of the praise of city walls in the written sources, see Bowden 2003, 102; Saradi 2006, 88, 98; Dey 2010, 35–36; Bakirtzis 2010, 363–364; Dey 2011, 131 and Jacobs 2013, 29–31.

123 Sarantis 2013.

124 Lawrence 1979, 235; Johnson 1983a, 13; Foss and Winfield 1986, 135; Greenhalgh 1999, 10; Ulbert 2006; DeStaebler 2008a; Jacobs 2009; Bakirtzis 2010, 361; Niewöhner 2010, 242–244; Niewöhner 2011, 114–119; Crow 2013, 408; Jacobs 2013, 60–93.

125 Winter 1971, 79, 82; Lawrence 1979, 244; Johnson 1983a, 38; Butler 1983, 127; Foss 1990, 171; Greenhalgh 1999, 9. Dey (2011, 151–153) offers the interesting suggestion that these bands of color may have been influenced by Christian representations of Celestial Jerusalem.

126 Crow 2001, 96; Bakirtzis 2005, 21; Jacobs 2009, 208; Niewöhner 2011, 115–118; Jacobs 2013, 78.

127 Southern and Dixon 1996, 131–132.

even an entire region. In late antiquity, when it had ceased to be a tradition for Roman rulers to lead the army in person, such acts of imperial beneficence played an important role in reassuring a populace under increasing pressure of invasion that they remained under the careful watch of their emperor.[128] What is more, the construction of a defensive enclosure blocked roads, divided neighborhoods, and permanently reshaped the daily interactions of people within and between cities.[129] It should also be recognized that, more generally, as major works of architecture, fortifications also likely shaped subsequent processes and perceptions of monumental construction.[130]

Given this aesthetic and meaningful potential, we should acknowledge, as M. Greenhalgh has recently argued, that fortifications deserve far more much attention from those who study reuse than they have received thus far.[131] Fortunately, this situation is easily remedied. For while they may approach the evidence from a somewhat different point of view, those who are now engaged in the more detailed analysis of fortifications have already shown that this body of evidence is incredibly well suited for a study of the role of individuals and groups in the use of *spolia*. There is a growing awareness of the fact that locally determined supplies of funds, material, and labor had an important effect on the final appearance of a defensive wall.[132] Not only were city walls built with *spolia*, but on many occasions, they were placed directly atop pre-existing structures so that their finished appearance may be as much the result of traditions of the building trade as insights gained through interaction with older monuments.[133] More exciting still are the frequent references to evidence for the practices of individuals or discrete work teams, whose unique styles and personal building traditions may have been responsible for

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128 Lee 2007, 21–37. 98–100.

129 Christie 2001, 116; Bowden 2003, 96–98; Bakirtzis 2010, 353, 368; Crow 2013, 423; Jacobs 2013, 19.

130 Ćurčić 2010, 24, 78; Greenhalgh 2012, 337.

131 Greenhalgh 1999.

132 Von Petrikovits 1971, 203–204; Lawrence 1979, 234; Johnson 1983a, 112–113, 129; 1983b, 74; Lander 1984, 258; Bowden 2003, 95. As many have noted, a traditional preference for stylistic dating techniques over secure archaeological evidence has led to the inaccurate periodization of many fortifications. See Gregory 1987, 253–255; Christie 1991, 187–188; Bakirtzis 2010, 353 and Jacobs 2013, 23–26.

133 Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 121; Foss and Winfield 1986, 3, 137. DeStaebler (2008, 292) notes that the walls of Aphrodisias are imitative of the Hellenistic tradition of pseudo-isodomic ashlar masonry, while Jacobs (2009, 198) speaks of restored Hellenistic period gates incorporated into later fortifications.

the occasional heterogeneous appearance of the completed fortification.[134] This in turn has even led some to offer a "hypothetical hierarchy of decision-making" that extends from the emperor down to "those who actually carry out the work."[135]

In the end, if we accept the fact that churches and fortifications held equal status in the image of the post-classical city, then we need to acknowledge that our efforts to understand the meaning of the use of *spolia* has thus far only utilized one of two major sources of evidence. On many levels, fortifications are little different than churches. Both types of monumental architecture were created on some level to awe and impress the viewer. Both required a significant amount of careful planning, not to mention a steady supply of large quantities of building material. What is more, each could be thought of as functioning at both a basic level—as a defense against attack in the one case and as place of assembly and ritual activity in the other—and at a more complex level as a backdrop for the visual exploration of a host of changing religious, social and aesthetic ideas.

But it is the differences between these two types of monumental architecture that make fortifications an attractive source of evidence for the study of spoliation. At a most basic level, fortifications often represent a much better preserved and more directly observable body of evidence. Where the appearance of the basilicas that remain in major urban centers has been obscured by extensive restorations or alterations throughout the Renaissance and early modern eras, scores of fortifications have instead fallen into disuse and are more than anything, simply victims of neglect and natural decay. Therefore, it is most often the case that defensive works can be studied in a condition that more closely approaches their original appearance.

Moreover, the fact that fortifications were outwardly directed and not designed to enclose a community of initiates within an artificial microcosm imbued with spiritual symbolism also offers a unique opportunity to test the results of studies that have argued that *spolia* use was religiously motivated. There is no doubt that the large body of extant Christian literature has provided scholars with a valuable source of evidence concerning the ways in which its followers viewed the world and their place in it. Some studies have also shown that the use of *spolia* in either groups of monuments or single buildings may

134 Stevens 1966; Winter 1971, 83; Lawrence 1979, 221; Johnson 1983a, 36, 91, 114; Maloney 1983, 98; Lander 1984; 255; Crow and Ricci 1997, 245; McNicoll and Milner 1997, 43, 58; Bowden 2003, 99; Brasse 2010, 276; Allen 2012, 2013.

135 Gregory 1997, 240–241. See also Zanini 2003; 2007.

well have played a significant role in illustrating and reinforcing that world-view.[136] But a careful examination of examples to which these religious interpretations do not readily apply offers a way to distinguish levels of meaning in the use of *spolia* that may have been either universally accepted or indicative of a different system of symbolism and social significance.

Finally, the ideas and techniques responsible for the appearance of fortifications are part of a tradition that is arguably much older than that of the Christian basilica or baptistery. As D. Winfield observes, "the principles governing the ancient and medieval arts of fortification were already known by about the second century B.C."[137] Thus the decision to equip the walls at Thessalonica with triangular towers may well be an indication of the continuing influence of Philon of Byzantium's third century B.C. *Poliorketica* on later Roman architects and builders.[138] Even the reuse of material for the construction of a city's walls was a practice that has been documented in some locations as early as the Hellenistic period.[139] Granted, the inclusion of these and similar examples in the study of *spolia* will require a great deal of intensive fieldwork, but such research may well reveal that fortifications were the monuments through which the earliest explorations of meaningful reuse took place and that further study of the manner of that reuse holds immense potential in exploring the phenomenon of spoliation and the role of individuals at the lowest levels of society to bring about the types of changes that we often attribute to the decisions and actions of the members of elite society known to us through the written sources.[140]

The Larger Context

Given the fact that the modern concept of *spolia* has no actual antecedent in the ancient world, it is both understandable and important that the very idea of meaningful reuse be evaluated critically at every turn. At the same time though, this introspection and self-awareness that has become a hallmark

136 Fabricius Hansen 2003.

137 Foss and Winfield 1986, 3.

138 Rizos 2011, 458. Niewöhner (2010, 259) also suggests that Hellenistic towers had an influence on the design of Byzantine walls at Perge, Side, Ephesos and Sagalassos.

139 For Hellenistic aesthetic reuse on Kea, see Lawrence 1979, 195 and at Miletus, see McNicoll and Milner 1997, 167. See also the discussion of the Hellenistic wall at Aegina below.

140 Travlos 1988; Gregory 1993; Crow and Ricci 1997; Andrews et. al. 2004; De Staebler 2008a; 2008b; Niewöhner et al. 2008; 2010 and Dey 2011 serve as model examples of the trend toward more intensive survey.

of *spolia* studies over the past few decades has diverted our attention from the larger historical issues and processes to which the act of reuse can speak so eloquently. It is important to recall that in the works of the Renaissance antiquarians who first invented the term, *spolia* were important because they provided evidence for artistic and social change. Even as he worked to draw attention to the practice for its own sake, Esch remained committed to the idea that *spolia* "could also provide evidence concerning the medieval perception of antiquity."[141] Yet more recently there has been a trend toward the study of *spolia* in isolation from its larger cultural and historical context. When connections are made to the larger post-classical world, they are frequently explored only insofar as they aid in explaining the features of a specific monument or in developing a historical narrative of *spolia* use.[142] In the words of M. Fabricius Hansen

> … interpretations of the new style [of reuse] have, in general, been avoided. Extensive ground has been gained regarding a descriptive architectural history of individual buildings. But compared to the investigations on the *whens* and *wheres* of the structures, the *whys* have attracted less scholarly attention.[143]

It is a given that we must first understand our subject before we can begin to grasp its larger historical and social significance and in this regard, extensive surveys and intensive studies of individual monuments are an essential first step. But it is now time to recognize the full potential of *spolia* to speak to the important changes that were taking place in Roman society at this critical moment in history.

141 In his words, "auch Aufschluß über das Antikenverständnis des Mittelalters zu geben vermögen." Esch 1969, 44.

142 Lachenal 1995.

143 Fabricius Hansen 2003, 15.

CHAPTER 3

Reuse as Repair: The "Inscription Wall" at Aegina

As we have seen in the previous chapter, *spolia* have become a subject of intense interest for art historians and scholars of late antiquity who have examined from numerous and diverse points of view a surprisingly small set of the larger body of monuments and objects built from reused materials. It is also clear that in their intense focus on *spolia* as unique objects, the vast majority of studies have not paid sufficient attention to reuse as a process that involves a number of individuals acting together in order to create the final product that we today find so fascinating. The process approach adopted here offers new insights into the practice of reuse because it focuses instead on evidence for decisions made at the level of the project in order to learn more about the unique set of interests and concerns that played a role in shaping a monument's final appearance. In our first case study, we will see that the builders of the "Inscription Wall" at the site of Kolonna on the island of Aegina likely envisioned this project more as a restoration of an ancient structure than a daring new use of a symbolically charged form of building material. In choosing to focus on the basic structural qualities of the blocks they reused instead of their symbolic or aesthetic potential, the builders at Aegina were working within the long tradition of reuse as repair. At the same time, inconsistencies in construction reveal that this overall conceptualization of the project took place not at the level of the project organizers, but at the basic level of the builders themselves.

The City of Aegina and Site of Kolonna

The roughly triangular-shaped island of Aegina occupies a central place in the Saronic Gulf midway between the Athenian port of Piraeus and the Methana Peninsula. The rocky terrain reaches its highest elevation on Mt. Oros in the south and plunges steeply to the sea on its eastern and northern shores. While this topography hinders both settlement and safe anchorage along most of its coastline, the northwest corner of the island is much more hospitable and allows both for a safe approach from the sea and for agricultural production. It is in this area that the settlement of Aegina grew and thrived in antiquity.

For the most part, the modern town of Aegina occupies the same location as its ancient namesake on the coast at the western edge of a gently sloping plain.

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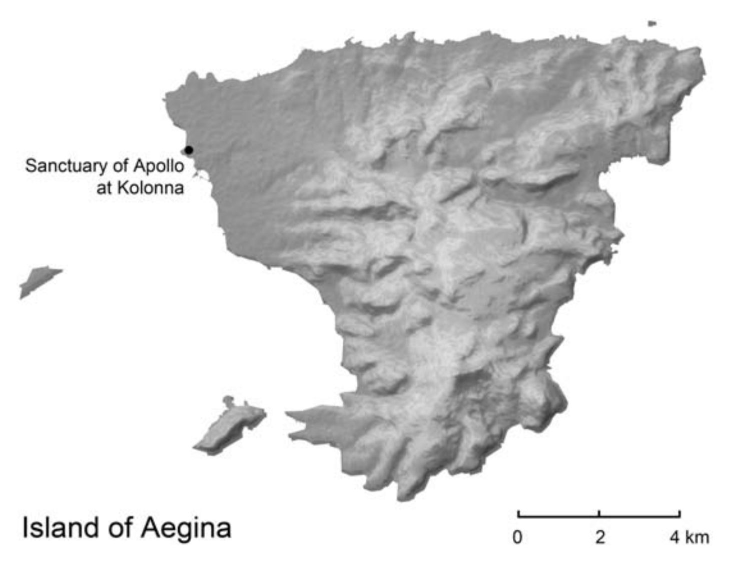


FIGURE 3.1 *Map of the island of Aegina, modified from base map provided by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under creative commons license*
DRAWING J. FREY

Upon a promontory just to its northwest is the site of the ancient acropolis, more recently named Kolonna in reference to the single standing column from the archaic Temple of Apollo. While tectonic activity has had little effect on the settlement, other geologic processes have significantly altered the shape and size of the acropolis as well as the ancient harbors.[1] Over the centuries, much of the limestone underlying the acropolis has crumbled into the sea, resulting in a noticeable loss of land to the north and west of the temple.[2] At the same time, rising sea levels first led to the abandonment of a harbor to the north of the site while the deposition of sediments carried to the coast from farther inland resulted in the silting up of the two later harbors to the south.[3] In general, a picture emerges of a settlement and sanctuary constantly dealing with the effects of erosion and a shrinking coastline.

1 Welter 1938a; Knoblauch 1972, 55.
2 Knoblauch (1972, 81) suggests that the acropolis plateau extended anywhere from 30 to 60 meters further into the sea.
3 Welter 1938a, 484; Knoblauch 1969, 112–113; 1972, 6.

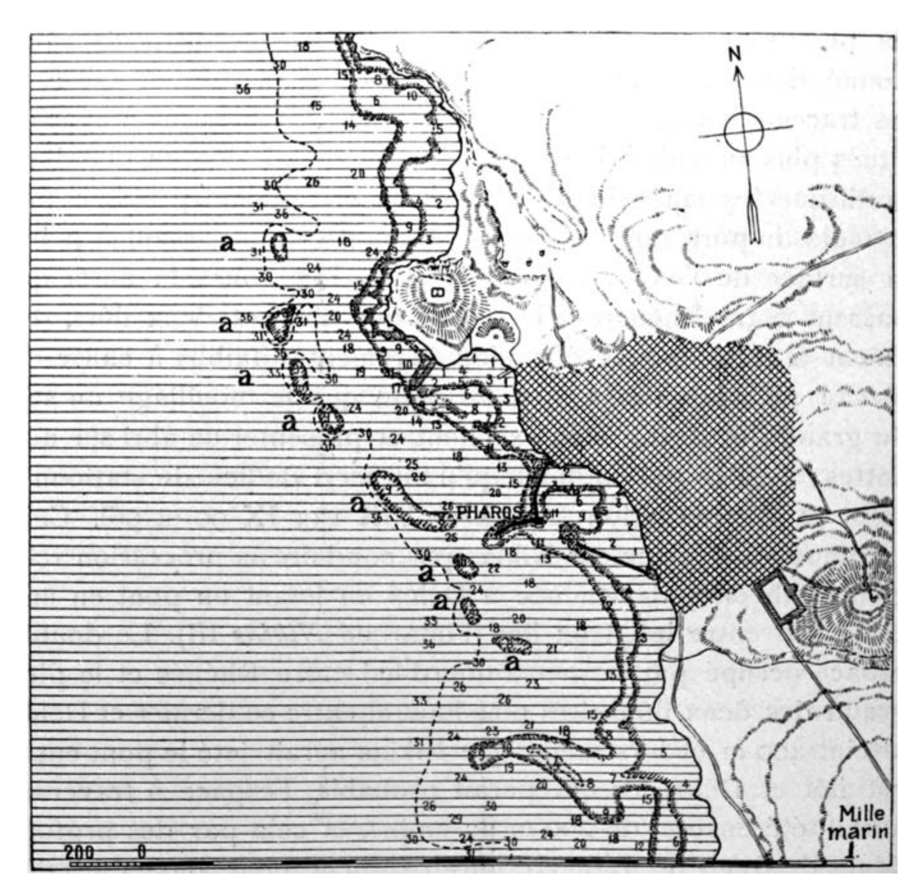


FIGURE 3.2 *Plan showing acropolis and northern and southern harbors*
FROM NÉGRIS 1904, FIG. 3

Historical and Archaeological Context

While the history of Aegina from the Bronze Age through the Roman era has been the focus of numerous studies, the island in the post-classical period is rarely discussed.[4] In the account of his visit to the city of Aegina, Pausanias (*Description of Greece* II.XXIX.6–II.XXX.4) notes the presence of no less than six different sanctuaries, a stadium, and a theater, the appearance of which he compares to the theater at Epidauros. Yet the fact that written references to the island all but disappear after the second century A.D. makes it rather difficult to

4 For a brief survey of the ancient sources for the history of the island, see G. Welter 1938b, 101–119.

determine what exactly became of the monuments mentioned in his account. What little evidence does exist suggests that Aegina continued to prosper well into the later Roman period.[5] G. Welter has argued on the basis of the extant city walls that the population of third century A.D., Aegina may well have exceeded that of its classical predecessor.[6] The town appears to have become the seat of a bishop by the middle of the fourth century A.D. and would remain so for at least another five centuries.[7] According to the much later *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, the island offered a sufficient sense of security for Corinthians fleeing an invasion of Avars to take refuge here in A.D. 588.[8] By the beginning of the tenth century A.D., however, the inhabitants seem to have abandoned the ancient coastal city in favor of a location further inland.[9]

Although the Aegina that again appears in the accounts of early modern travelers differs markedly from that of Pausanias' day, it is also worth noting the degree to which modern activity at the site has been responsible for its destruction. For the processes of disassembly and reuse commonly attributed to late Roman social and economic decline were arguably at their greatest level of intensity in the years surrounding the modern Greek War of Independence.[10] Most notably, S.G. Howe took great pride in his decision to distribute aid to the refugee community on Aegina in the form of payment to the men and women he charged with the task of renovating the town's commercial harbor. Part of this process involved "… loosening and disengaging the huge blocks of stone from the mass of rubbish with which the center of the ancient temple is filled, then carrying the stones down to the shore and leaving them for the masons …"[11]

Aside from documenting the frequent use of the sanctuary for building material, some reports also provide additional information about the ancient

5 Goette 2001.

6 Welter 1938b, 46–47.

7 The scant evidence is listed in Welter 1938b, 110–111.

8 See Charanis 1950. Whether or not this actually occurred is in some ways irrelevant. Apparently the island was considered a sufficiently defensible refuge to either sixth century Corinthians, or the ninth century author of the *Chronicle*.

9 Welter 1938b, 48; Yannoulis 1986, 7–8.

10 For example, Cockerell (1860, 40) noted that blocks from the temple were being removed to Nauplion by Venetians, while L. von Klenz (1838, 161–163) voices his suspicion that Russian builders had carried off materials to the nearby island of Poros.

11 This use of the ancient blocks to rebuild the town had been initiated a few years before by I. Kapodistrias. According to Howe, upon his arrival the Greek government was employing 1200 workers in the construction of an orphanage. See Richards 1906, 305–310.

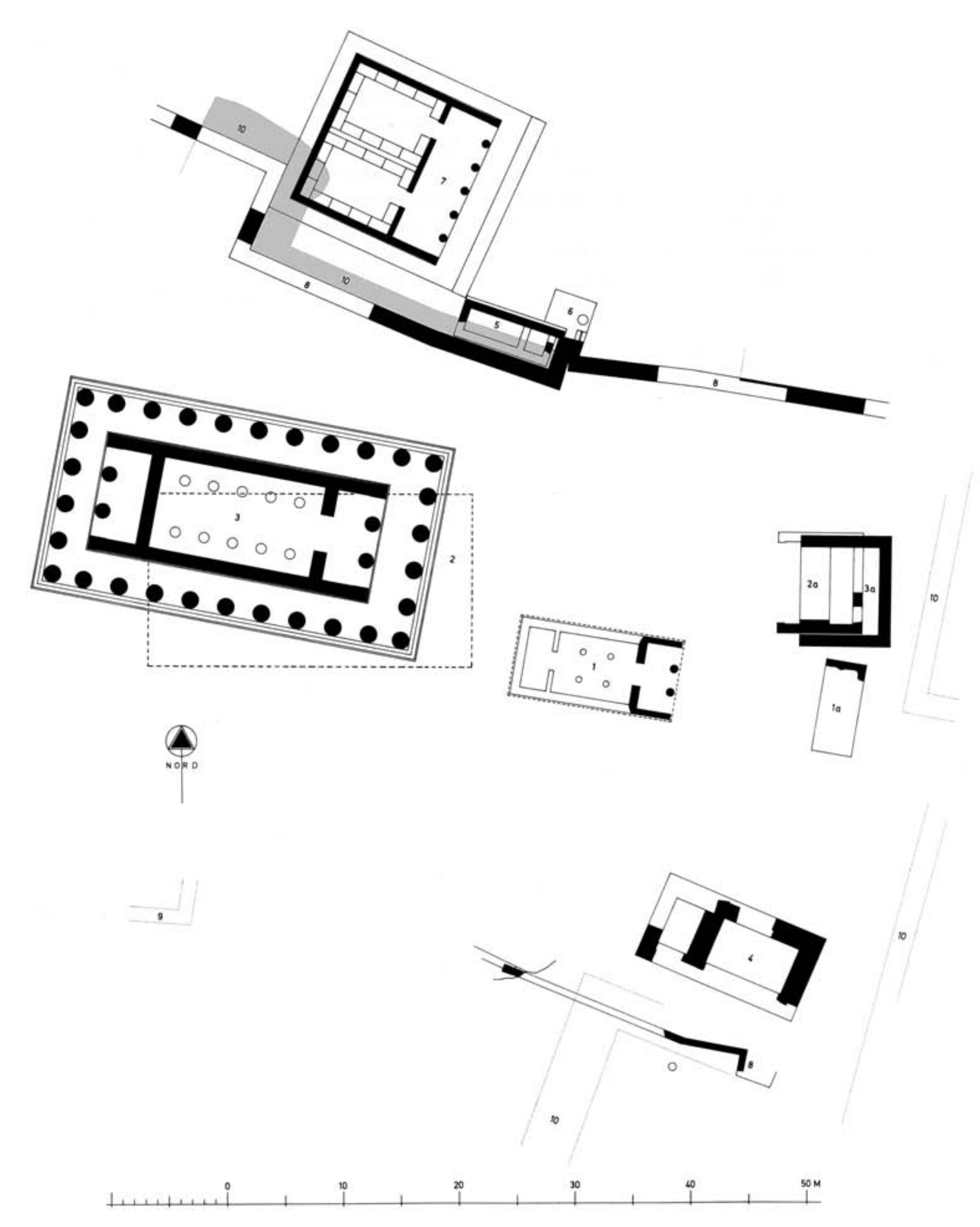


FIGURE 3.3 *Plan of features of Sanctuary of Apollo with location of Inscription Wall indicated in grey*
COURTESY K. HOFFELNER



FIGURE 3.4 *Central section of Inscription Wall from north*
PHOTO J. FREY

city.[12] Of greatest relevance to the present study is the account of W.M. Leake, who at the time of his visit in the early 19th century, could still trace the city's defenses and even locate the main gate on the landward side. This circuit also included walls placed in closer proximity to the temple itself. According to Leake, "There are considerable remains of the peribolus … and these walls are prolonged beyond the temple so as to inclose all the cape, and form a kind of citadel."[13]

As the result of excavations over the last nine decades, the part of this citadel now commonly identified as the Inscription Wall has been fully exposed. It consists of an almost 25 meter long northwest to southeast oriented stretch of coursed masonry with a mortar and rubble backing, bounded on its eastern and western ends by two tower-like structures. The monument derives its name from the numerous inscribed blocks that were reused into order to form the

12 For a summary of these early visitors' accounts of the site of Kolonna, see Wurster 1974, 12–17.

13 Leake 1968, 431–442.

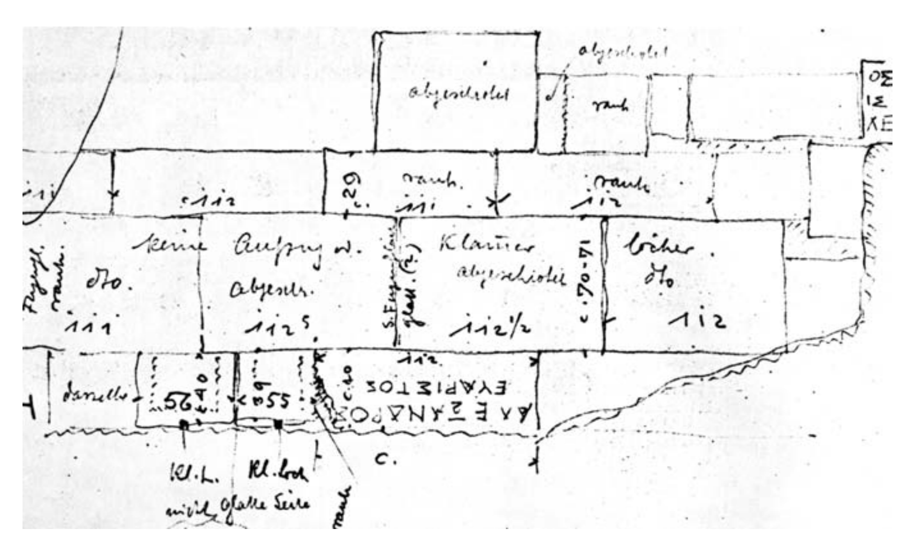


FIGURE 3.5 *Ernst Feichter's sketch of excavated wall in 1924*
FROM WURSTER 1975, 10, ABB. 2

outer shell of the wall. This barrier, which in places is preserved to a height of nearly five meters, is the point of transition between the elevated sanctuary plateau to its south and the short strip of land bordering the cliffs that drop steeply to the sea on the north. If approached from the south, it is easily overlooked, but from the opposite direction, this wall clearly and impressively marks the northern boundary of the ancient acropolis.

Although it is possible that the Inscription Wall was at least partially visible in the 19th century, this was no longer the case when it was first identified and explored as part of the systematic study of the site beginning in 1924.[14] No sooner had it been revealed though, than it was again buried beneath an accumulated mass of soil excavated from the within the temple temenos. It would be almost forty years before archaeologists returned to this area and fully exposed the fortification wall down to its foundations.[15] While the resulting 1975 publication carefully described the wall, its authors were far more concerned with the appearance of the original structure that had been sacrificed for its build-

14 Maps of the Kolonna site drawn by Lehmann-Hartleben 1923, fig. 3 and Négris 1904, 348, (fig. 3) show a line just to the northeast of the Temple of Apollo in the same location as the now excavated Inscription Wall. The plan in Wolters' (1925, 3–4, fig. 1) report shows only the eastern section of the wall. This agrees with E. Fiechter's sketches showing that the excavated area ended short of the last quarter of the western end of the Inscription Wall. See also Wurster 1975, 9–10, figs. 2–4.

15 Eckstein 1972, 26–28.

ing materials.[16] In their reconstruction, W. Wurster and F. Felten suggested that the blocks of the Inscription Wall had come from a single building of the Doric order with a colonnade or a freestanding frieze. The evidence of stone working techniques, building materials, and architectural style all suggested that this original structure dated to the last quarter of the sixth century B.C.[17] The archaeologists reasonably concluded that the monument had once served as a dining hall as many of the ashlars that once formed its walls still carried the inscribed names of members of a dining cult that continued to be active well into the Roman era.[18]

This dining hall is not the only evidence of long-lived architectural traditions at the site. Additional excavation and study conducted since 1978 has shown that the Inscription Wall not only follows nearly the same course as two other walls erected in the late-Archaic and the Hellenistic periods, but also copies earlier precedent in its use of recycled materials. K. Hoffelner has shown that the late-archaic wall in this area served both as a boundary for the temple temenos and as a retaining wall for the enormous quantity of earth that forms the temple platform to the immediate south.[19] Subsequent work in the area northeast of the Temple of Apollo has revealed additional sections of the late-archaic wall, which, according to a brief mention of the new discovery, appear to be a continuation of the structure already published by Hoffelner.[20]

E. Pollhammer has also presented the evidence for a previously unrecognized Hellenistic fortification that encircles the acropolis, following in many places the same route as the archaic temenos wall.[21] Yet even more significantly, he also offers compelling evidence that the blocks used by the third century B.C. builders were recycled from pre-existing structures within the sanctuary. As an example of Hellenistic era architectural reuse, this newly uncovered defensive wall again challenges the notion that spoliation is primarily a late antique practice. But it also suggests that the later Roman effort to erect the

16 Wurster 1975, 9–38.

17 Wurster 1975, 28–30.

18 Felten 1975, 50–52.

19 Hoffelner 1999.

20 Pollhammer 2004b, 83.

21 While in most places, he relies on stylistic dating techniques—namely the absence of tile and mortar frequently used in later construction—a section of wall found within the west "tower" of the Inscription Wall has been dated on the basis of ceramic evidence to the end of the third or the beginning of the second century B.C. Pollhammer 2002, 99–108. See also, Pollhammer 2003; 2004a; 2004b.



FIGURE 3.6 *Remains of Hellenistic-era tower north of the Temple of Apollo from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

Inscription Wall should be seen as part of a much longer tradition of site maintenance rather than a sign of desperate measures in the face of a growing threat of invasion.

Since the stratigraphic context of the Inscription Wall was affected by activity at the Kolonna site long before it was fully exposed, archaeological evidence is only of limited use in establishing the date for this structure. In addition, the near complete destruction of the city walls over the last century has removed any possible physical link between this monument and the larger network of later Roman civic defenses.[22] A date based on building style has also proved elusive.[23] In the end, the reused blocks themselves provide the only solid chronological evidence. In his initial study of the wall, Felten noted that there were

22 Welter (1938a) associates this fortification project with the reconstruction of the city harbor in the mid-third century.

23 At the time of its initial discovery, E. Fiechter had labeled the wall a "venezianische Kastelmauer," (Wurster 1975, 9), while in his report on the 1923/4 excavations, Welter (1925, 321) refers to the structure as a "byzantinische Stützmauer."

in fact two separate sets of inscriptions preserved on the faces of the ashlars. The first group consists of a list of names that had been arranged in columns on the walls of the original Doric order structure and apparently carved over a long span of time. The second group of names, however, was carved in a much shorter period and was inserted in the spaces between the columns of the original registry. Most importantly, all but one of the entries in this group share the same name of Αυρήλιος, almost certainly dating them to the period of time after the 212 A.D. *Constitutio Antoniniana*.[24] Thus a *terminus post quem* in the early third century can be established.

Working from this evidence, archaeologists have proposed a date of construction sometime soon after the A.D. 267 Herulian raid.[25] Indeed, this seems a reasonable suggestion as effects of this incursion have been documented in the Athenian Agora, and may well have spurred the Aeginetians to action.[26] However, in light of A. Brown's recent critical look at historical and archaeological assumptions that have colored our interpretation of the evidence for this raid, it may be more likely that the walls at Aegina were built in response to the much more lengthy and widely recognized invasion of the Visigoths under Alaric in the last decade of the fourth century.[27] This revised date finds some small amount of support in the presence of wheel-ridged pottery in the spaces between ashlars of the wall and in the substantial rise in surface level in this part of the site as indicated by the fact that the foundations of this wall are well above, and even incorporate errant blocks from the former sanctuary. Assuming that the blocks in the Inscription Wall came from a nearby structure, then one must allow for a sufficient amount of time following the creation of the later inscriptions and the abandonment of the building for this area to fill with eroded soil and for the traces of pre-existing architecture to have been forgotten.

This though, leads to another problem. For the exact location of the building that served as the source of the material used in the Inscription Wall remains an unresolved issue. Hoffelner's suggestion that the dining hall, which he identifies as the Thearion mentioned in Pindar's *Third Nemean Ode*, should be associated with a set of foundations located only five meters to the north of

24 Felten 1975, 48–50.

25 Welter 1938b, 46; Wurster 1975, 12; Walter 1993, 63–64.

26 There is, of course a great deal of confusion over the dates of the invasions and the identity of the invaders. See, A. Alföldi 1939; Thompson 1959; Millar 1969; Frantz 1988, 5–11 and Travlos 1988.

27 Brown 2010.

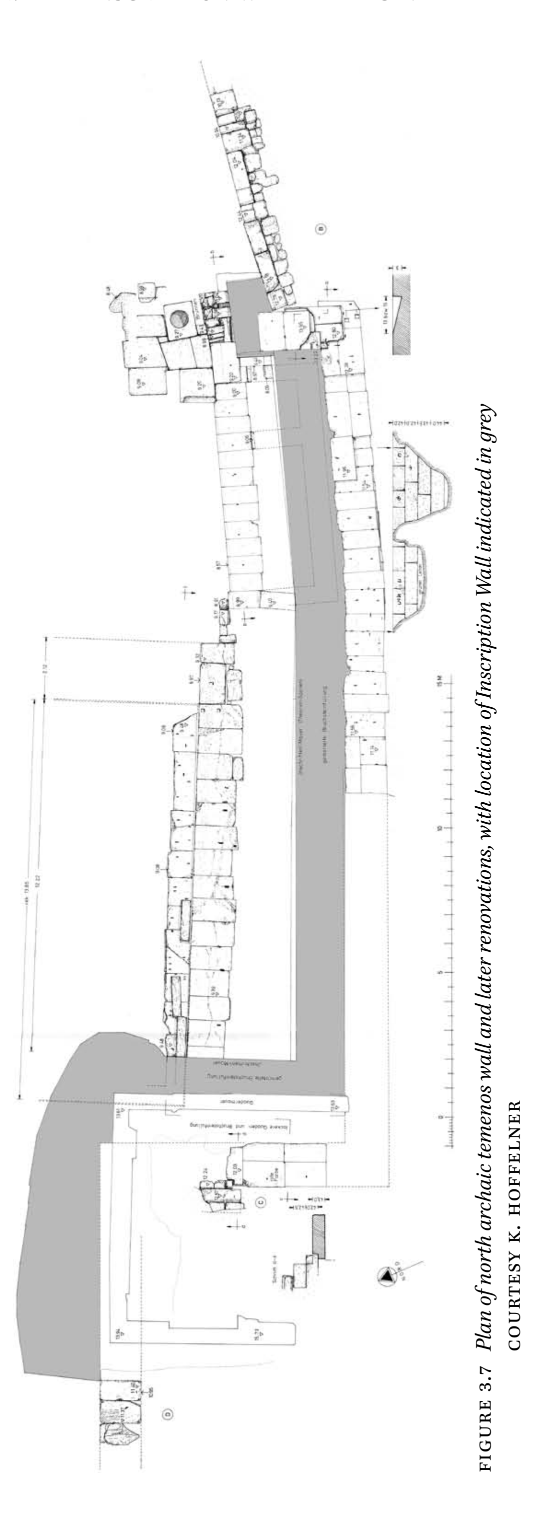


FIGURE 3.7 *Plan of north archaic temenos wall and later renovations, with location of Inscription Wall indicated in grey*
COURTESY K. HOFFELNER

the Inscription Wall has met with a number of objections.[28] Most significantly, Pollhammer has drawn attention to the fact that while it is not mentioned in his discussion of the Thearion, Hoffelner has placed the remains of a "*Quadermauer*" over the southwest corner of the dining hall's foundations in his plans. Pollhammer has associated this wall with the east side of a Hellenistic tower, a claim that Hoffelner seems to confirm in a brief reference to the find spot for reused fragments of an earlier Temple of Apollo.[29] If this wall is part of a Hellenistic structure, its presence atop the corner of the earlier foundations almost certainly signals an end to whatever building was present there. This then cannot be the location of the dining hall, which continued to be in active use in the third century A.D. Nor can the reconstruction of the plan and elevation of the dining hall based on the dimensions of the foundation be assured.[30] Unfortunately, the necessary disassociation of these foundations and the Thearion leaves a remarkably long-lived and sizeable building without a location, not to mention a foundation without a superstructure. More importantly for the present study, this also means that the supply of material for the construction of the Inscription Wall came from a more distant location, a fact that should be kept in mind when discussing the economy of reuse practices at this site.

Description of the Inscription Wall

Although they often obscure more than they reveal, the superimposed layers of walls to the north of the acropolis show that maintaining this barrier continued to be an important consideration for those who occupied this site over the centuries. Moreover, the evidence of the Hellenistic wall shows that the use of *spolia* had become a building tradition here at Aegina long before the construction of the Inscription Wall. On the other hand, the Inscription Wall is unique in its prominent display of sections of these earlier walls, which were incorporated wholesale in the circuit of the later Roman defenses. This is particularly apparent at the eastern end of the section studied here, where the fortification includes a segment of the original late archaic temenos wall, which runs

28 For the identification of these recycled blocks with the Thearion, see Walter-Karydi 1999. Objections to the reconstruction of the name lists and the location of the Thearion outside the temple temenos have been raised by Cooper (2001) and Mattern (2001).

29 Hoffelner 1999, 5.

30 Pollhammer 2004b, 84–86.



FIGURE 3.8 *Elevation of entire span of Inscription Wall (top) and detail view of central section (bottom)*
COURTESY K. HOFFELNER



FIGURE 3.9 *East "tower" and repaired east wall*
PHOTO J. FREY

in an east-west direction for close to seven meters before coming into contact with a tower-like projection. Over this short stretch, the wall quickly climbs to a height of seven undisturbed courses (a little more than three meters tall), yet only parts of the upper three courses of this section are repairs. The rest consists of the well-dressed and carefully joined stones with drafted margins typical of pre-classical construction elsewhere at the site.[31]

Too small to have served as a tower in any reasonable sense, the eastern "*Mauervorlage*" extends at a right angle to a distance roughly 1.2 m north of the eastern section of the Archaic period wall.[32] This feature is rectilinear in shape and measures a little more than 2.5 m across its northern face. All three sides of this projection show signs of extensive repairs. On its eastern side, the pre-existing wall has been completely overbuilt, while on its northern and western sides, the lowest four courses of the earlier structure are preserved in full. It is worth noting that the upper sections of later masonry maintain

31 This section of the wall has been carefully described by Hoffelner (1999, 29–130).

32 Wurster 1975, 12.

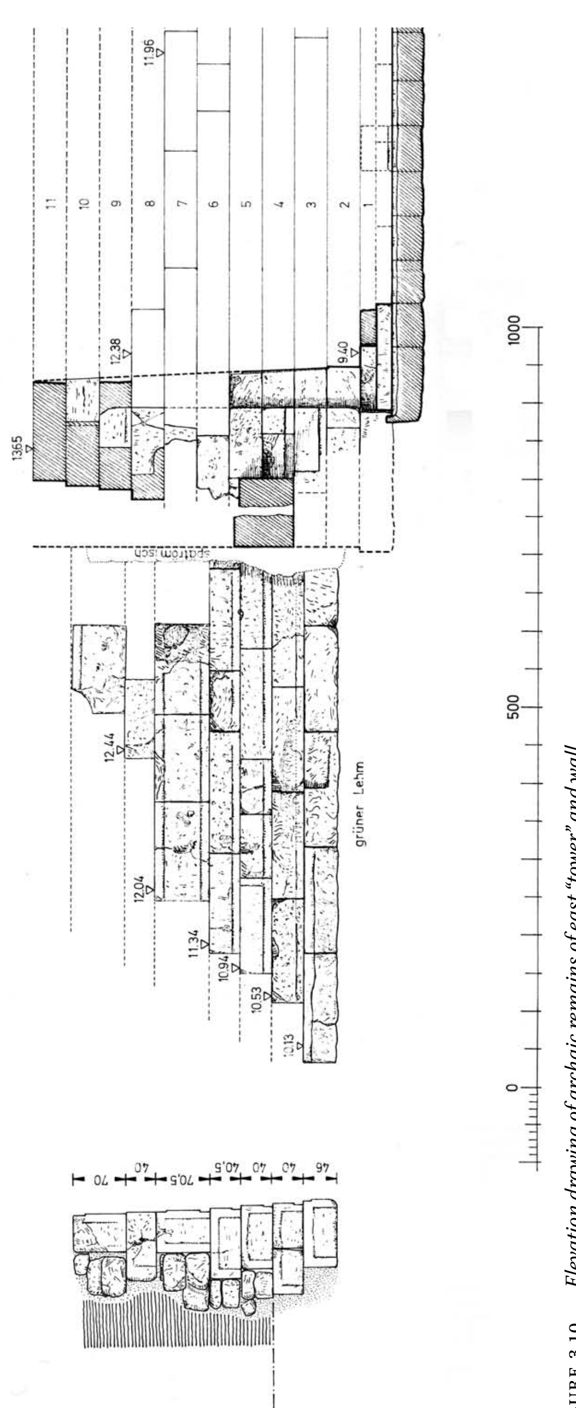


FIGURE 3.10 *Elevation drawing of archaic remains of east "tower" and wall*
COURTESY K. HOFFELNER



FIGURE 3.11 *Detail view of construction of central section of Inscription Wall from north*
PHOTO J. FREY

the same slight inward slope on their north and west façades that was begun at the lower courses of original blocks in this section.[33] At no point is this "tower" bonded to the other sections of the wall: on its east side, the rear edge has been built flat against the eastern flank of the wall, while the west face provides the starting point for all courses of its large central section. This in turn allows us to conclude that in general, the wall was built from east to west in three separate units that were each completed at least to their present height before the next section was begun.

The central part of the wall itself rests upon a 1–1.2 m deep, somewhat irregular foundation built from fieldstones and a few carved blocks set in place with a sparing amount of mortar. The upper surface of these foundations is not completely level, but is instead slightly lower in the center and reaches its highest point on its western end. This is likely due to the fact that the underpinning for the wall followed the contours of the terrain as it appeared at the time of construction. While it is not possible to determine their overall

33 Hoffelner (1999, 130) gives a backward slant of .07 m over a height of 1.30 m.

thickness, these foundations project roughly 0.10–.20 m from the front face of the wall.[34]

Above this, the reused architectural fragments have been placed in roughly consistent horizontal courses, forming an outer shell that is of varying thickness. Small fragments of tile, stone, and pottery and a sparing amount of mortar have frequently been applied in between the vertical and horizontal joint surfaces of the ashlars. Both elements vary widely in character and consistency: the mortar generally tends to be white and friable, but contains crushed stone, pottery, and pebbles in a range of shapes and sizes that discourages classification. The ceramic material placed between the blocks ranges from thick yellow-green tile fragments with large red inclusions, to unevenly fired reddish-orange tiles, along with a whole assortment of broken coarse wares.

Excavations conducted to the immediate south of this span have shown that the Inscription Wall is built at a consistent distance in front of the façade of the late archaic temenos wall.[35] The later wall so closely matches the shape of its predecessor that it even replicates a slight change in course at a point roughly 10 meters west of the eastern "tower." The small concave bend that results from this imitation of the late archaic wall is small, but noticeable.[36] The space between the two walls is filled with a nearly meter thick mass composed primarily of a large quantity of fieldstones along with a smaller amount of broken architectural fragments embedded in a low quality lime mortar. The mortar has been applied rather sparingly and ranges in consistency from a crumbly white to a light brown that in places closely resembles the surrounding soil. Traces of horizontal seams between deposits of mortar, often indicative of stages of construction, are not readily apparent here. Above the presently preserved level of the archaic wall, there is no rear face to the later Roman structure. As a result, the rubble and mortar core at the top of the wall has disintegrated, leaving the rear face of the three uppermost courses exposed at a height of almost five meters above the foundations.

At its western end, the wall turns at a right angle and runs in a straight line for a distance of 4.5 m before disappearing beneath the outer face of a later refurbishment. This later phase is represented by the curved façade of a large tower that juts out at a shallow angle from the earlier wall and then curves

34 Wurster 1975, 10.

35 Hoffelner 1999, 129.

36 In plan, the bend is set back 0.43 m from what would have been the straight line of the wall, Wurster 1975, 9.

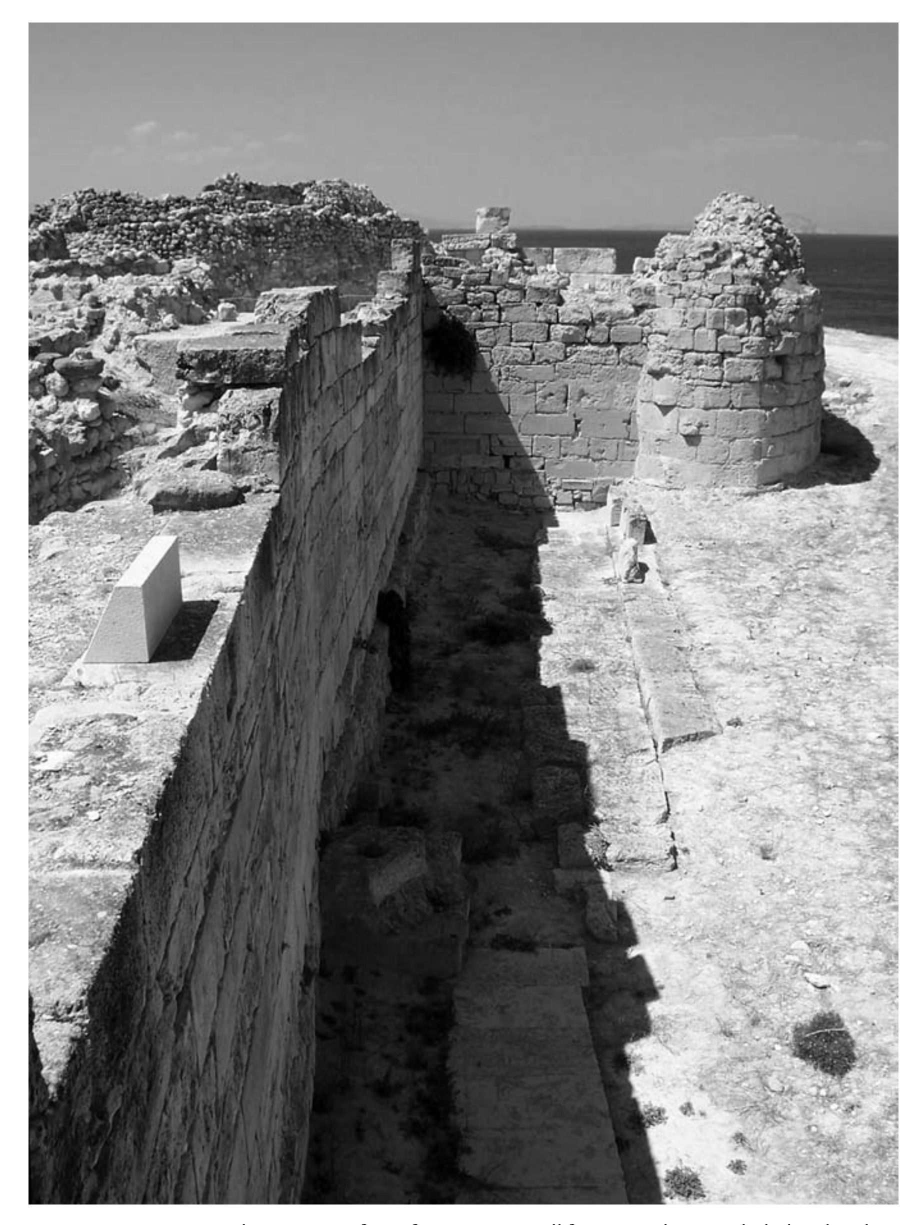


FIGURE 3.12 *View along exterior face of Inscription Wall from east showing slight bend in the course of the fortifications*
PHOTO J. FREY

sharply back on itself toward the west. Beyond this, the course of the Inscription Wall cannot be traced.[37]

Repairs to this part of the fortifications have left little of the original construction, but it is clear that this northwestern section is bonded to main span of the Inscription Wall from the foundations to a height of almost three meters above the late Roman surface. From this bonded joint, it is possible to trace a line which steps downward from south to north and marks the point of contact between the original wall and later repairs. Thus, only the lowest eight courses of this wall remain intact at the southwestern corner and this number quickly shrinks to include only the lowest three courses before the wall disappears behind the rounded tower. On the rear face of this section of the wall, it is possible to identify several phases of later repairs that obscure the original construction of the Inscription Wall.

Reuse as Repair

Even though our knowledge of the Inscription Wall has benefited from a number of careful studies, these investigations have been concerned with the appearance of the fortification only insofar as it contributes to a reconstruction of the original source of the building materials. As a result, the evidence this structure provides for a better understanding of the actions of later Roman builders working in recycled architecture has gone largely unstudied. Yet when one concentrates on this wall as evidence of its late antique construction, a picture emerges of a project that continued to follow many of the same customs and techniques as the previous two walls in this location. In this regard, the Inscription Wall stands as an excellent example of the ways in which the use of *spolia* may not always imply a break with the traditions of the past. This is especially the case with respect to the easternmost section of the wall, where the majority of the "tower" and its adjoining retaining wall should be associated with the original archaic temenos.[38] The decision of later Roman masons

37 Limited excavation in 2006 to the north of the western tower has revealed an additional set of foundations that emerge from beneath the face of the tower and extend to the northwest. The excavators have associated these new foundations with the Inscription Wall on the basis of construction style, but their relationship to other pre-existing walls is largely obscured by the later construction of the rounded bastion in this area. See Felten et al. 2007, 209.

38 Hoffelner 1999, 129–130.



FIGURE 3.13 *Rear face of central section of Inscription Wall built up against remains of Archaic period wall from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

to repair these structures and incorporate them into the Inscription Wall's span defies easy explanation based on economy or utility, for the renovation process did not simply involve stacking new blocks atop roughly cleared sections of



FIGURE 3.14 *Western end of central span of Inscription Wall from southeast showing bonded masonry and later repairs to wall*
PHOTO J. FREY

pre-existing architecture. Rather, the badly weathered condition of the earlier temenos wall required that builders carry out a series of intricate repairs.

In the section to the east of the eastern tower, ashlars with drafted lower edges laid in courses without mortar or chinking represent the original archaic wall. While some ashlars of the third course above the foundation level show signs of heavy weathering, it is at the point where the fourth, fifth, and sixth courses once met up with the tower that at least three original blocks are missing altogether. Rather than rely on the heavy use of mortar and smaller stones to fill the empty space, builders inserted large ashlars that effectively maintain the level coursing of the original wall. What is more, the joints between the old blocks and the new repairs are nearly seamless.

For the eastern "tower" itself, the necessary repairs were even more difficult to perform. Even though they rebuilt this section from the ground up, the later Roman masons still chose to respect its overall dimensions. They first constructed a slightly wider foundation using fieldstones, mortar, and one large inscribed ashlar. Atop this they built up the side of the tower, forming the corner out of alternating courses of headers and stretchers. This task was greatly complicated by the limited amount of space in which the blocks were



FIGURE 3.15 *Projecting eastern "tower" from northeast*
PHOTO J. FREY

forced to fit. The result was the unavoidable use of a large number of smaller stones inserted in the spaces between the "tower" and the late archaic temenos wall to its east.

The situation only grew more complex for the builders on the northern and western sides of the tower. While at least two completely preserved courses of the original archaic construction remained above the later Roman surface level, an additional five courses of the structure are represented by single pieces of badly weathered ashlars. Although it is possible that the later Roman builders simply reused parts of the original temenos wall that had become dislodged along with the remains of the dining hall, the consistent level coursing and clean, mortar-free joints between these blocks, not to mention the continuation of the rearward slope of the lower courses, all suggest that they are actually still in situ. Thus, it is likely that here too the later Roman masons opted to build around these irregularly positioned blocks. Yet, again the later repairs have been almost seamlessly united with the original fragments of the tower.

Where in other circumstances, the wholesale incorporation of pre-existing structures into the fabric of a wall may have been done in order to save time and



FIGURE 3.16 *West side of eastern "tower" from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

effort, the difficulty involved in carefully replacing weathered or missing blocks in the face of this archaic structure suggests that this repair and reuse was not primarily driven by an interest to economize. Each of the newly set stones, whether an entire block or smaller fragment, had to be chosen or even further



FIGURE 3.17 *Rear face of central section of Inscription Wall from south*
PHOTO J. FREY

shaped to fit with the surviving elements of the Archaic-era wall. Thus, at the very least, the resulting appearance of the masonry of this tower should not be seen as a sign of careless or hurried construction. Instead, the almost confusing, puzzle-like arrangement of stones that make up the faces of this section of wall reflect a significant degree of skill and attention to detail. Arguably, it would have been easier to make use of this tower by enveloping it in an entirely new façade so that it is quite possible that the builders acted out of an appreciation for this ancient monument, which may have given them a strong sense of their own place in the ongoing process of construction and repair of walls at the site.

In contrast to this eastern section, the remainder of the Inscription Wall is purely a product of later Roman work. Thus, it differs little from other contemporary ashlar and mortared rubble walls save for one telling feature.[39] At no point along its middle span does it show any sign of the presence of a rear

39 On the adaptation of Roman construction techniques in Asia Minor and the eastern Mediterranean, see Vann 1976; Johnson 1983a and Foss and Winfield 1986. On the other hand, the repair of earlier walls through the addition of a new outer façade is not unknown in the region. See Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 129, 146.

face above the uppermost preserved level of the original late archaic temenos. Instead, where it has been exposed, the rear face of the wall's core is irregular and uneven, but does not show the impressions of blocks that may have been lost since the time of its construction. Such a surface likely resulted from the pouring of rubble and mortar into a space bounded on the front by the reused ashlars of the Inscription Wall and on the back by a vertical cut in the earth itself.

At first glance, one is tempted to conclude that the omission of a rear face is again a sign of careless construction. However, upon closer scrutiny it becomes apparent that, just as in the case of the tower and walls to the east, here too the builders have followed the tradition of their archaic predecessors, even going so far as to replicate the slight concave bend in the course of the temenos wall. Surely, it would have been easier to erect this span along a straight line between the eastern and western towers and given the fact that the space between the archaic wall and the later fortification consisted of a mass of rubble and mortar, the resulting increase in the space between the two structures could have been filled in with additional debris. In fact, it is at this central point along the span of the wall that an even thicker wall would have been useful. It is important to recall that the archaic wall served a double role as both a barrier against free passage into the temenos and as a retaining wall for the mass of soil that had built up since the beginning of settlement at the site in the Bronze Age.[40] The abrupt change in elevation from the temple foundations down to the nearby coastline required a strong buttress against soil erosion and the design of the original wall shows that this was a consideration on the part of the Archaic period builders. For example, each horizontal course of the original wall was progressively stepped back a few centimeters from the one below so that the face of the wall at the top was offset by as much as 0.5 m from that at the bottom. In addition, the rear faces of each course projected backwards to different depths in order to ensure a strong bond with the soil.[41]

Although it is likely that the Inscription Wall was primarily built to meet the defensive needs of the later Roman site, it is clear that this fortification also had to deal with the same problems of topography as its predecessor. It is to this necessary structural concern that we should attribute not only the absence of a rear ashlar face, but also the decision to replace rather than

40 In this respect, it is worth noting that Hoffelner (1999, 129–132) makes little distinction, calling the Archaic period structure both "*Temenosmauer*" and "*Stützmauer*" interchangeably.

41 Hoffelner 1999, 129.

repair this central section of the wall. We cannot know the condition of the original temenos wall that now lies behind the outer shell of the Inscription Wall. Perhaps it was deemed insufficiently stable to reuse in the manner of the walls to the east of the eastern tower. Or perhaps in this location where the soil of the temple platform reaches its highest elevation, later Roman builders were concerned that the horizontal seam between the earlier archaic wall and its later renovation would have been a point of potential instability. Whatever the reason, the fact that the solution adopted by the Archaic period and later Roman builders is so remarkably similar suggests that local conditions and building traditions played just as important a role in shaping the final appearance of the Inscription Wall as the choice to build in recycled materials.

Toichobate and Orthostate

Likewise, a careful evaluation of the use of materials in the wall's main façade shows that a great deal of planning, based in large part on long-standing traditions of construction, occurred before the blocks were set into place. Such an interpretation does not deny that builders adopted a practical and economical approach in erecting this wall. For example, the use of blocks of similar height in the same horizontal course doubtless simplified the process of selecting and preparing stones for use.[42] In addition, the use of small fragments of stone, tile and pottery to smooth out irregularities in between ashlars is much more economical than carving close-fitting joint surfaces. At the same time though, many other details of construction show that the use of *spolia* does not always indicate a conscious rejection of the building practices of the past. In fact, it may well be the case that a number of time-honored techniques actually made it easier for builders to construct a fortification from materials that were not originally carved for this purpose.

Because the foundations change in elevation due to the natural terrain in the area, the masons likely recognized the need to create a level building surface before erecting the upper courses of the wall. For the central span of the wall, they achieved this by means of a consistent placement of blocks that were carefully selected out of the available supply. Along the eastern two thirds of the central span, they laid a series of wall blocks as headers with their short end facing outward so that the bands of anathyrosis are typically still visible

42 Wurster 1975, 10.

today. Yet for the western third of the wall, where the ground level rose slightly, they selected shorter triglyph and geison blocks for this lowest course.[43]

Where the wall turns at a right angle to the north, the elevation of the upper surface of the foundations shows that at the time of construction, the terrain dropped off much more sharply. Here builders continued to set geison and frieze blocks in place at level that was nearly one full course below that of the central span of the wall, but soon switched to even taller blocks in an effort to maintain a level upper surface for this first course. This drop in the elevation of the foundations inevitably broke the regular sequence of blocks that the builders had followed for the central span of the wall.

For the second course along this central span, the builders employed the same type of ashlars selected from the walls of the original structure. However, in this course alone, they placed the blocks on edge and most typically with the original resting surface facing outward. As a result, in many instances the anathyrosis is still clearly visible as a pair of thick bands that now run horizontally across the upper and lower edges of the blocks. The only exceptions to this regular pattern of use concern a group of four frieze blocks, also placed on edge, at a point roughly 4.5–10 m from the west end of the central span of the wall as well as the section of the wall that turns at a right angle to the north at the western end of the central span. In the first case, the insertion of frieze blocks, which initiates a consistent break in the pattern of level coursing for the next six courses above, will be discussed in more detail below. In the second case, it appears that, in order to counter the drop in terrain that had already interrupted the regular coursing of the lowest course of ashlars, builders opted to set two rows of blocks in place instead of the typical single course of ashlars.

That builders were able to achieve uniformly horizontal coursing so quickly and in spite of the irregular terrain is noteworthy, especially considering the fact that they were not working with newly quarried stones. It is even more remarkable that, in spite of these challenges, the masons at Aegina were generally successful at imitating the much older practice of erecting a toichobate and orthostate as the lowest two courses of their wall. It is difficult to say definitively whether this unique feature comes as the result of a long-standing tradition among the masons who worked at Aegina or whether builders simply imitated a feature that they observed among structures that were still visible within the sanctuary. In either case, the similar appearance of walls built centuries apart

43 Hoffelner (1999, 137–160) gives an exhaustive description of all blocks from the Thearion used in the Inscription Wall and according to his measurements, frieze blocks and geisa tended to be 0.10–.20 m thinner than the wall blocks of the original structure.

but at the same location may well have served as a reminder to builders that the practices they followed were part of a tradition that extended back to the Archaic period.

Once they had established a sufficiently secure base, the builders must have felt more at liberty to construct the remainder of the wall in a less consistent, yet no less careful fashion. For the next four courses the thick, well-carved ashlars that formed the walls of the dining hall are the preferred building material, but by the eighth course these heavy blocks are much less commonly used. Instead, at this point lighter elements taken from the original building's entablature become more frequent. While it is certainly possible that the supply of particular architectural elements was beginning to grow thin, it seems much more likely that a discernible switch to smaller blocks resulted from practical considerations. After all, as the height of the wall grew so did the level of difficulty involved in lifting stones into place. Furthermore, the upper courses of the wall would not have had to support the weight of the entire wall and were not as likely to come into direct contact with attackers.

Headers and Stretchers

At the same time, the dimensions of these various architectural elements likely played a significant role in the manner of their use. In several locations across the face of the wall, builders carefully arranged a variety of blocks in sequences of headers and stretchers in order to bind the wall's outer shell with the much thicker mortar and rubble core to its rear. They may well have selected blocks from different sections of the original building in order to ensure that the rear face of this outer shell be as varied in depth as possible.[44] For example, in the uppermost preserved courses of the wall, masons utilized a number of geison blocks in construction. At one point, they consistently placed these blocks on edge with their decorative faces oriented toward the wall's core so that the resulting course is as tall and shallow as possible. Yet, just two courses below, builders took advantage of the thin profile but greater length and width of the geisa in order to form a thin header course along most of the wall's width

44 On average, a simple ashlar or architrave from the Thearion measures, 1.10 m (l) × 0.55 m (w) × 0.40 m (h). By turning the blocks ninety degrees on axis, the thickness of the outer face of the wall is doubled. An even greater change in thickness exists between the first and second courses where the blocks used on end, as orthostates would only have been 0.40 m thick compared to the 1.10 m thickness of the underlying stretchers. Hoffelner 1999, 137–160.



FIGURE 3.18 *Rear face of central span of wall from south showing alternation of block positions to achieve a header and stretcher effect*
PHOTO J. FREY

by laying them flat on their original resting surfaces.[45] In places where the rubble core has eroded and the rear sides of many of the reused architectural elements now lie exposed, one can see that this alternation of headers and stretchers has been carried out with respect to other architectural elements as well. Furthermore, it may well have been by design that builders oriented blocks in such a way that their decorative surfaces would have also contributed to their ability to bond with the wall's core.

Builders also employed an alternating pattern of headers and stretchers in order to bond the central span of the wall to the north-south section to its west. Having achieved a horizontal upper surface at the same level as the orthostate course of the central span, builders regularly continued to use blocks in the same orientation on both sides of the corner. In so doing, a header block of the central span naturally became a stretcher block in the north-south section and

45 Frieze blocks (1.10 m (l) × 0.25 m (w) × 0.70 m (h)) and geisa (1.10 m (l) × 0.90 m (w) × 0.30 m (h)) placed with their shortest dimension facing outward give the wall a substantially greater thickness of 0.70–1.10 m. Hoffelner 1999, 137–160.

vice versa. Although the section of wall extending north from this turn is badly preserved, this alternating pattern can be traced up to the eighth course above the rubble foundations.

Vertical Joints

On closer inspection, even the smaller blocks inserted at seemingly random intervals between the well-cut ashlars of the former dining hall can be seen to reflect a traditional approach to ensuring the structural integrity of the wall. It is commonly understood that the repetition of vertical joint surfaces between courses or bricks or ashlars creates a point of potential weakness in a wall. As such, the ideal solution, especially when using consistently sized building materials, is to stagger each course by one half the length of the block. Yet in the case of the Inscription Wall, where consistency in the size of the ashlars was not guaranteed, a great deal more planning was required in order to achieve a similar result. Because the central span of the wall was built in courses from east to west, it is possible to observe that in each case, the insertion of a smaller block allowed builders to position the next block in the sequence over the vertical joint in the underlying course.[46] The relationship between the two lowest courses of ashlars serves as a particularly good example of this carefully observed practice. Because the most commonly used blocks at this point in the wall are roughly twice as long as they are wide, the change in orientation required to form the toichobate and orthostate courses would have resulted in the constant repetition of vertical joints between ashlars. Therefore builders began the second course by inserting a smaller block between the east "tower" and the first full sized ashlar in this row in order to stagger the vertical joints. The same solution was adopted just four ashlars later when the use of slightly smaller blocks in the toichobate course would have caused the vertical joints between courses to align again. This approach appears to have been generally effective as the repetition of vertical joints between these lowest courses occurs only once near the western end of the central span.

These first two courses are not unique. In fact, in nearly every instance, the presence of one of these smaller blocks can be attributed to a constant concern with staggering the vertical joints in the wall. Likewise, one is hard pressed to find a place in the Inscription Wall where a vertical joint matches the location of the one above or below. As in the case of the other more traditional

46 Hoffelner 1999, 136.

building practices, it would appear that the vertical arrangement of building materials speaks in favor of a great deal of care and consideration in planning and executing this construction project.

In the end, the only significant exception to the consistent application of these various techniques concerns a part of the central span of the wall located between five and ten meters east of its western end. This section differs markedly not only in its near exclusive use of architectural members from the uppermost parts of the original building, but also in the general absence of blocks arranged as headers and in the disruption of the regular horizontal coursing that is consistently followed to its east and west. It is difficult to understand why this should be the case and only a couple of potential explanations can be offered. There is the possibility that some type of obstruction prohibited the erection of the wall in a uniform and consistent fashion in this specific location. There are, to be sure, no signs of such an impediment visible from either side of the wall, but considering the confused mass of earlier walls within the temenos, many of which come into direct contact with the rear face of the archaic wall, it is possible that the slightly thinner façade of the wall here may represent an attempt to accommodate some pre-existing feature that is hidden from view. A somewhat more attractive explanation concerns the possibility that the blocks used here were set in place in a space left between the eastern and western ends of the central span and once the supply of inscribed blocks had been exhausted. The rough V-shape in this section of the wall might at first glance suggest that this represents a later repair, but the common source of the reused architecture would seem to rule out this possibility. Instead, it may well be the case that this anomalous section represents a temporary stopping point between phases of construction or even the meeting point between different teams of builders.

Meaningful or Decorative Reuse?

The fact that this part of the Inscription Wall is built entirely from materials taken from a single building, yet features an orthostate course, a system of headers and stretchers, and even a number of intricate repairs to pre-existing monuments can only mean that the construction process first involved the sorting of materials on the basis of their shape and size. For only in this way could each block have been carefully considered and the most suitable fragment selected to meet a particular builder's immediate needs. Thus it is important to consider whether the aesthetic potential of reuse ever played a role in this process of selection and placement of ashlars. Studies of *spolia* to date have suggested

that this might have happened in a number of ways and were this monument a Christian basilica, we might be inclined to pay special attention to the way in which the appearance of the original structure was either recreated, reinterpreted, or even subverted in the reuse of its sculpted elements. Or, given the numerous inscriptions carved into the outer face of the ashlars, we might reasonably suspect that the presence of the written word played a role in the careful placement of these architectural members. Thus, it may come as a surprise that, at least in the case of the section of wall studied here, these aesthetic and symbolic possibilities were of little concern to later Roman builders.

To begin with, the Inscription Wall does not appear in any way to reflect an effort to imitate the look of the original building in a secondary context. Unlike other monuments for which a process of careful and accurate reassembly of an earlier structure has been documented, the wall at Kolonna rarely copies the original arrangement of blocks in the dining hall.[47] With only one exception, when similar architectural fragments appear side-by-side in the same course of the wall, their orientation has always been changed so that no element of design passes from one block to the next. In the one case when two architraves have been used in sequence in the same course near the western end of the central span, the taenia, regula and guttae have been chiseled off of each block. In fact, most ashlars have been positioned in a way that hides their original decoration. This is most apparent near the top of the wall where the carved surfaces of geisa have been oriented toward the mortar and rubble core, leaving only the cuttings for clamps and lifting devices visible on the exterior façade. Furthermore, even in terms of the basic vertical arrangement of architectural elements, the canonical order of Doric style architecture has not been at all maintained. Masons used geisa and frieze blocks throughout the wall from the lowest to the highest courses. In fact, it is not even possible to identify a place where elements have been arranged in an inverted order as might have occurred if the original monument had been disassembled and its pieces immediately used in the new wall.[48]

In the case of the inscriptions, which in other studies have been understood as laden with potential significance and meaning, there is little to suggest that the presence of the written word played a role in the selection and placement of blocks either.[49] To begin with, no inscribed ashlar appears next to the one it once joined in its original context. Moreover, several examples have been

47 The third century A.D. Beulé Gate at Athens serves as an excellent nearby example. See Dinsmoor 1910; Travlos 1971, 357–360 and Gregory 1982b.

48 For example, as Foss and Winfield (1986, 133) had found for the walls at Pergamum.

49 Coates-Stephens 2002.



FIGURE 3.19 *Rear face of central span of wall from southeast showing inscribed block oriented toward interior of wall*
PHOTO J. FREY

built into the wall upside down, which would have made reading their already jumbled content even more difficult. It is also worth noting that due to the shallow depth of the inscriptions, a viewer standing more than a few meters away from the face of the wall begins to have difficulty discerning the individual letterforms.

Yet, even if we leave aside the issue of legibility or even visibility and assume, as others have, that the mere presence of words in an ancient script granted the wall a certain monumental and decorative effect, we must still acknowledge the fact that the display of these inscribed blocks in the outer face of the Inscription Wall may not have been a rigorously pursued policy.[50] For example, in the eighth course above the foundations, three inscribed blocks span the area marked by the slight concave bend in the course of the wall. While the inscribed surfaces of the two eastern blocks are visible from the north, the westernmost block in this sequence has been turned so that the inscribed names face toward the center of the wall. This singular example is known to

50 Felten 1975, 39; Wurster 1975, 11; Papalexandrou 2003, 56–80.

us only because the rubble core has eroded away in this location. Yet, Hoffelner's more recent and thorough investigation of the Inscription Wall has documented the existence of several other inscribed surfaces that have been obscured because of the orientation of the ashlars.[51] The difference between the new scale elevation published by Hoffelner and that originally published by Wurster is remarkable. While the initial study gives the impression of a wall which features a prominent display of all available inscriptions, this latest assessment shows that a nearly identical number of inscriptions have been positioned at the side or bottom surface of the block in its secondary context.

It may be possible to argue that the structural requirements of the wall prohibited the display of each block's inscribed surface. For no less than sixteen inscribed blocks have been identified in the lowest two courses where their use as toichobates and orthostates left no option but to hide the inscription. The same could be said of the headers in the third and fourth courses above the foundations. Yet at the same time, there are a number of blocks of appropriate dimensions that have been used as stretchers and do not feature an inscription on the front or side faces. This leads to two possible conclusions. Either the block was not originally inscribed or the inscription faces the interior of the wall. In the first case, given the argument that builders first engaged in a careful process of sorting and selecting blocks for reuse, it is difficult to understand why a plain block could not have been set in place as a header or orthostate, leaving the potentially decorative block for later use as a stretcher. In the second case, it is hard to see why a block with front and rear faces of equal dimensions could not have been rotated to display the inscription in the outer surface of the wall. It seems rather unlikely that all of the potentially decorative blocks had been damaged to the point that they were no longer seen as fit for display, especially given the less than perfect condition of some of the blocks that can be seen.

It is obviously impossible to look inside a wall and Hoffelner's study is clearly the closest one can come to doing so without completely disassembling the structure. Thus, while a definitive answer is not possible, it stands to reason that at one of two points, the decorative qualities of these stones simply did not form a significant aspect of their evaluation as building material. This omission can only have occurred either when workers disassembled the dining hall and sorted its architectural elements or when builders selected these pre-sorted elements for use in the wall. In either case, it would seem that

51 Wurster 1975, 9; Hoffelner 1999, 136–143.

the masons considered other goals of the project to be more important than either reproducing or reinterpreting the decorative features of the building that served as the original source of building materials.

Uniformity?

While it is doubtless the case that the builders of the Inscription Wall were primarily motivated by the need to construct a strong barrier against attack, this does not rule out the possibility that they also sought to achieve an aesthetically pleasing visual effect. Moreover, we should be receptive to the idea that this aesthetic principle may have differed from both that of the classical era and that which is commonly understood to govern the use of *spolia* in late antiquity. Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of this wall is the degree to which the builders were able to achieve a uniform appearance in spite of the local terrain and supply of building materials. It has been noted that with very few exceptions, the outer face of the *spolia* wall has been finished with a remarkably flat surface.[52] This is typically the result of a careful selection of blocks from the lower walls of the original dining hall. Yet even where builders have utilized architectural fragments from the uppermost courses of the Doric order building, they have either oriented the decorative elements toward the core of the wall or they have chiseled away irregular protrusions.

In this context it is also worth mentioning those architectural fragments that do *not* appear in the wall. According to the reconstruction originally suggested by Wurster and reiterated most recently by Hoffelner, the structure that served as the original source of the building material for the later Roman wall featured a row of Doric columns in antis.[53] Yet, not a single fragment of

52 Wurster 1975, 9–10.

53 Wurster 1975, 28–32; Hoffelner 1999, 160–171. Wurster had come to this conclusion on the basis of evidence for two different types of frieze blocks carved for the original structure. In the one, a recessed groove had been carved in the triglyphs for the insertion of a separately carved metope, while in the other, a triglyph and blank metope were carved from the same block. One set of frieze blocks must be located above a solid wall while the other above a colonnade. Unfortunately for Wurster, only a single Doric capital of the appropriate dimensions had been recovered and subsequently lost in the early 1900s and is now only known from a sketch; Wurster 1975, 17–20 and 29–33. In confirmation of Wurster's reconstruction, Hoffelner (1999, 152–153 and 163) recovered "in Bereich vor der Spolienmauer" at least five fragments of Doric capitals that may belong to as many as three different columns. He suggests that the dining hall featured five columns in antis.

a column or capital appears built into the outer face of the wall. Given that the columnar supports would likely have been as accessible as any other part of the original structure, their absence would seem to suggest that builders selected against these pieces in particular. Inasmuch as the entire surface of the Inscription Wall is built from squared ashlars, it is possible that curvilinear elements were excluded out of hand because they were thought to detract from the appearance and integrity of the wall.

Finally, a closer examination of the Inscription Wall shows that builders had originally filled all the joints and other spaces between blocks with mortar in order to give the outer face the smoothest possible finish. As they appear today, the vast majority of blocks in the wall have darkened due to weathering except for a thin band along their edges that is often noticeably lighter.[54] The presence of small traces of mortar on many of these edges suggests that the joints between blocks had once been covered with mortar, protecting them from the effects of weathering seen elsewhere on the surface of the wall. However, as the present condition of the wall shows, the use of mortar to fill joints is not actually essential for structural integrity, even when reused architecture is involved. Furthermore, a similar treatment of the vertical joints in the Inscription Wall rules out the possibility that builders used large amounts of mortar as a bedding to even out irregularities between courses. In fact, the evidence of the wall's core and foundations points to a sparing use of mortar in construction in general. The only reasonable explanation is that this mortar was applied after the blocks were set in place specifically for the purpose of giving a smooth finish to the façade of the wall.

Thus we must conclude that if this wall represents any aesthetic concerns at all, they are most decidedly not those typically attributed to late Roman building projects in *spolia*. There is here neither an attempt to imitate classical forms, nor an interest in reinterpreting the decorative elements of an earlier structure. Rather, this wall shows clear signs of the builders' general indifference to elements recognizable as parts of a Doric order structure. At the same time this does not mean that the builders of the Inscription Wall were not particularly interested in the final appearance of their project. Rather, the remarkably smooth, almost monolithic, appearance of the Inscription Wall can only have resulted from a concerted effort to create this visual effect.

54 Wurster (1975, 12) notes the same phenomenon concerning the rear face of the wall where it had been protected by a covering of soil.

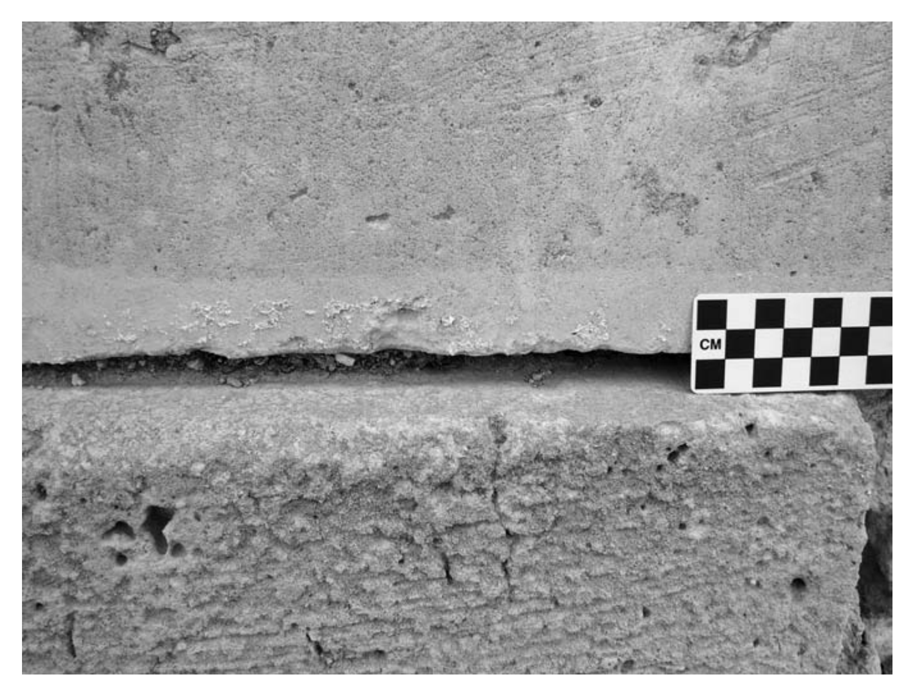


FIGURE 3.20 *Detail of central section of Inscription Wall from north showing traces of mortar and evidence of discoloration*
PHOTO J. FREY

Conclusions

As has been shown, even though the historical sources are completely silent concerning the inspiration, sponsorship and overall organization of construction for the Inscription Wall, it is still possible to extract from the remains themselves a great deal of important information regarding the processes responsible for its final appearance. Moreover, in spite of the fact that we cannot identify the individual agents themselves, we may nevertheless begin to place their decisions and actions along a continuum stretching from the highest levels of overall project design to the lowest levels of implementation.

To begin with, even though it was largely determined by the local terrain, the overall course of the fortification wall cannot have been left to chance and must therefore have been determined by an individual or individuals at the highest levels of the project. Those who made this decision must have recognized that the sharp change in elevation along the northern side of the acropolis offered a major advantage to those seeking to erect a strong defensive wall. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the fortification in this area taking any other shape. For a wall backed by a mass of earth and debris would have been far stronger

than any freestanding structure and the greater height that the terrain allowed those defending the site would have given them a distinct advantage against attackers from the north. Given the unsettling development that raids into the center of the Empire began to include attacks by sea, a strong fortification wall overlooking the northern bay would have come as a welcome addition to the late Roman defenses of Aegina.

At the same time though, the steep terrain that provided such a good defense also threatened the integrity of structures built upon it. The processes of sedimentation and costal erosion that continue to threaten the site even today were doubtless just as active in antiquity and must have always required careful consideration. At least since the time of the construction of the Temple of Apollo in the Archaic period, a retaining wall had been required to keep the massive quantity of soil from washing over the cliffs to the north. As a result, this temenos wall always served the double role of boundary and buttress and it has often been difficult, if not irrelevant, to distinguish between these two purposes. This continued to be the case even in the late Roman period. For while one function of the Inscription Wall may have shifted slightly from marking out a sacred space to defending the monuments and inhabitants of a later Roman settlement, the second, equally important need to prevent the loss of soil through erosion must have strongly influenced the overall design of the wall.

Secondly, it is also likely that the decision to work in recycled materials was made at the highest level of direction for this project. The well preserved and uniform appearance of the *spolia* allows us to conclude that a single building—a dining hall that was still in active use as late as the third century A.D.—was selected for use and, given the lack of evidence for an attack on the island, perhaps even disassembled specifically for this fortification project. The fact that the foundations just to the north of the Inscription Wall do not appear to be the source of the *spolia* is an interesting detail in this regard, for it does not allow us to conclude that the demolition of the dining hall was required to clear the land in front of the fortification. Thus it is quite likely that a structure such as this would have doubtless been considered an important part of the public ornamentation of the city and its demolition must have required the type of civic, regional, or perhaps even imperial approval, that can be found in the later Roman law codes and other contemporary sources.

Next, the location and manner of use of the *spolia*, not to mention the complete absence of any fragments of the columns that were certainly part of the original structure, must mean that the architectural remains of this building were sorted before use. It is worth recalling that, unlike newly quarried stone, where the ashlars would have been of a shape and size established beforehand,

recycled architecture carries with it the additional difficulty of making stones fit together in a way that often differs markedly from their original arrangement. Sorting the ashlars beforehand would have greatly simplified the process of identifying the most suitable blocks for use in a specific location in the wall. Again, this suggests a certain degree of overall project organization, perhaps at the level of the building contractor.

However, the absence of bonded joints between the eastern *Mauervorlage* and the curtain walls to its east and west as well as the large section of irregularly coursed masonry just west of the center point of the main span of the wall point to the presence of multiple work crews working simultaneously on this project. What is more, the complete absence of any indication of a systematic effort to replicate the appearance of the original building, or contra wise, to hide any indication of reuse would suggest that there were no project-wide instructions governing the manner in which the individual ashlars were set in place. The inconsistent orientation of inscribed blocks stands as the clearest proof that references to the prior use of the building were nearly irrelevant. Instead, it would seem that at the level of the builders and masons, each team made use of the building materials in whatever way seemed most effective. This aspect of relative autonomy among teams may well explain why in some locations, builders repaired parts of the Archaic period wall, while in other locations, they replaced it altogether.

It is within this overall context that the innovative use of traditional building techniques is so remarkable. For when faced with the difficult task of erecting a defensive wall according to a pre-determined plan and utilizing a pre-determined supply of building materials, masons and builders at the lowest levels of the project responded neither by replicating exactly the appearance of the original monuments nor by rejecting entirely the methods of construction that brought these works into existence in the first place. Rather, through the utilization of toichobate and orthostate courses, the implementation of a system of headers and stretchers, and the sparing use of mortar they participated in creating a new style of architecture. All of these details of construction argue in favor of a project carried out with an attention to detail not typically attributed to defensive walls built in *spolia* in the later Roman period. Such an assertion does not necessarily deny that the Inscription Wall also offers evidence of economizing behavior or even a move away from the careful craftsmanship of the classical Greek period, but this structure simply cannot be taken as evidence of a hurried and careless response to the sudden arrival of invaders.

Actually, in some ways, this mixture of tradition and innovation was in late antiquity already a custom at Aegina. It has already been noted that centuries before the erection of the Inscription Wall another *spolia* wall was built in the

Hellenistic period, distinguishable from the later Roman fortification chiefly on the basis of a lack of mortar used in construction. This wall also followed the course of the much older Archaic period temenos wall of the Sanctuary of Apollo. Evidence of a decision to include parts of the Hellenistic wall in some places and to repair rather than to replace the archaic temenos wall in others may represent moments when the later Roman builders were afforded an opportunity to imagine their role as fitting into a continuous tradition extending back to their classical past. The difficulty involved in piecing together carefully selected fragments in order to restore the eastern "*Mauervorlage*" and the preserved section to its east certainly appears to have been much greater than building anew. Yet the repair was carried out, and this may well hint at the self-perception of some builders as custodians, rather than destroyers of the past.

CHAPTER 4

Reuse as Reinterpretation: Section R at Sparta

In the previous chapter we have seen that a focus on the process of construction and the possible influences and motivations of builders reveals important insights into the ways in which the use of *spolia* is dependent upon a unique, locally determined set of circumstances. In the case of the Inscription Wall at Aegina, when left with a degree of autonomy, the local builders concerned themselves more with erecting a strong, secure barrier wall than with exploring the aesthetic and symbolic possibilities of using architectural elements carved in the past. At the same time though, through their continued use of ancient building techniques, not to mention their decision to repair and incorporate parts of pre-existing walls, those who constructed this fortification show us that their general indifference to the appearance of *spolia* should not be taken as evidence of a complete break with the classical past.

In the second case study, we will see that the builders who erected one section of the later Roman fortifications at Sparta utilized *spolia* in a different fashion. For their attention to the shape and color of the *spolia* marks an important shift away from aesthetic principles common to the classical era. However, the inconsistent utilization of these particular characteristics in an effort to recreate a familiar motif of Doric style architecture indicates that it was again at the level of the masons and work crews that *spolia* was explored not as a repair, but as a reinterpretation of the past.

Sparta in the Roman Period

Located in the northern part of a valley between the massive limestone peaks of the Taygetos range on the west and the Parnon range on the east, the Roman city of Sparta no longer relied entirely upon its natural setting or the celebrated strength of its citizens for its defense. Surrounded by walls at least since the third century B.C. and increasingly under the influence of powerful Roman individuals who were far more enchanted with the idea of Spartan past than its physical realities, the city had become much like any other developed urban center in Greece.[1] Thus, by the time the Romans finally eliminated the Achaean

1 Piper 1986, 174–175, 186–189; Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 133–134; Waywell 1999, 6. For a brief summary of the historical sources for the defenses of Sparta, see Frazer 1965, 323–324.

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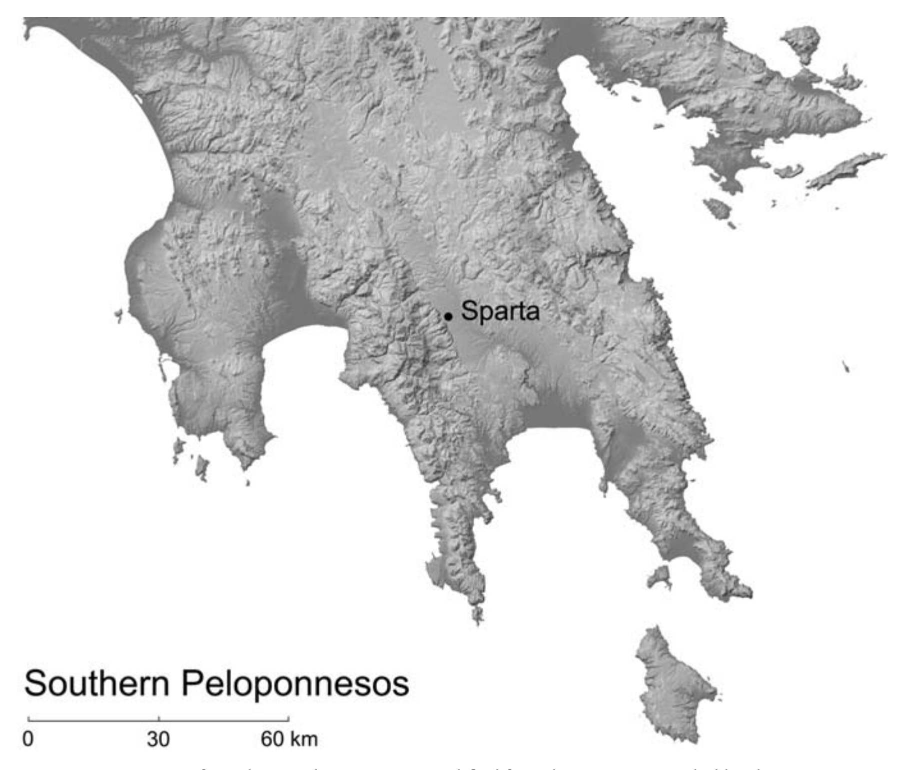


FIGURE 4.1 *Map of southern Peloponnesos, modified from base map provided by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under creative commons license*
DRAWING J. FREY

League as a threat to Sparta in 146 B.C., "all that remained … of the old Spartan ways were the peculiar mode of clothing and style of hair, which constituted both literally and figuratively a mere keeping up of appearances."[2]

In fact, it was the city's support of the young Octavian that played the most important role in guaranteeing its fruitful longevity.[3] In the following centuries, the city received numerous imperial benefactions such as a two-story stoa faced in marble, a gymnasium and associated aqueduct and a large marble theater.[4] At the same time, Spartans renovated and maintained famous struc-

2 Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 84. On the growing dependence of Sparta on Rome, especially with respect its long-standing and bloody conflict with the Achaean League, see Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 59–90.

3 Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 95.

4 For the stoa, see Waywell and Wilkes 1994; 1997 and Waywell 1999, 14. For the gymnasium, see

tures associated with the city's earlier history, such as the Temple of Artemis Orthia.[5] Thus, by the time Pausanias arrived in Sparta, "this area had acquired the character almost of a museum, crowded with statues of deities and famous Spartans and old tombs, and sanctuaries, and dominated by its showpiece the Persian Stoa, originally built from the spoils of Plataea and famous for the figures of defeated Persians which supported the façade."[6] The list of monuments and other buildings known from his second century account or from the material evidence of architectural fragments and inscriptions is most impressive.[7]

Pausanias undoubtedly caught Sparta at its zenith, for by the middle of the third century A.D., "public inscriptions had become a rarity" and the evidence for the condition of the city becomes hard to follow.[8] It is debatable whether the Herulian raid that had such a devastating effect on the Athenian Agora reached as far south as the Spartan urban center.[9] On the other hand, it is more than likely that the A.D. 375 earthquake mentioned by Zosimus (*Historia Nova* IV.18.1–2 and V.6.3) caused a certain amount of damage to the city. Architectural elements in the theater area featuring the names of Theodosius and Honorius suggest rebuilding activity lasting at least until A.D. 395.[10] However, no sooner had these repairs been initiated than Sparta fell victim to the Visigoth raid that involved a number of the major cities of the Peloponnesos.

It is most likely that soon after this pair of tumultuous events, a much more constricted defensive circuit was erected around parts of the city in the first decades of the fifth century A.D. It is clear that this project involved the reuse of a large quantity of the city's public monuments and certainly marks a turning point in the nature of settlement at Sparta, which was now centered upon the defensive enclosure. While the theater may have remained a point of assembly for some time after it was incorporated into the fortification wall, the evidence of recent excavations shows that by the eighth century A.D., most of this area

Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 113, 129–130, 216. For the theater, see Woodward 1923–1925a; 1925–1926; 1926–1927; 1928–1929; 1929–1930; Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 129; Waywell and Walker 1995; Waywell and Wilkes 1995; Waywell et al. 1998; Wilkes 1998; Waywell and Wilkes 1999 and Waywell 1999, 15–22.

5 Bosanquet 1905–1906a, 282; 1905–1906b; 1905–1906c.

6 Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 127.

7 Cartledge and Spawforth (1989, 216–225) provide an excellent summary of the various structures.

8 Cartledge and Spawforth, 1989, 121.

9 Brown 2010.

10 Waywell 1999, 22.

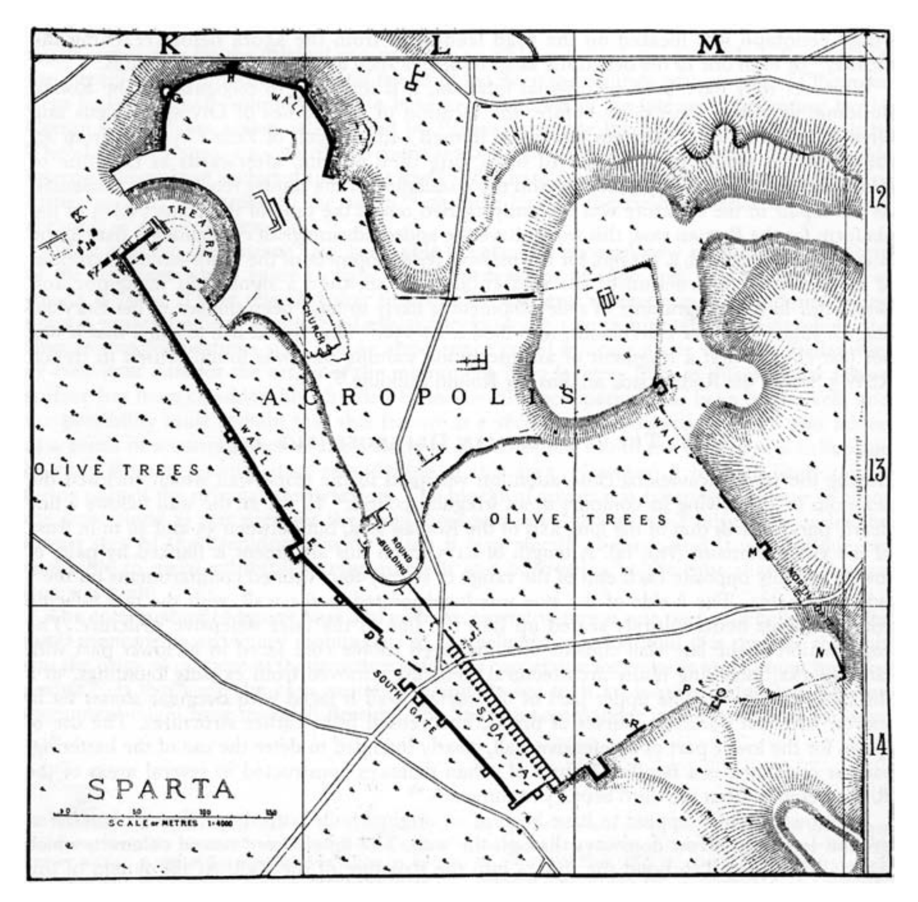


FIGURE 4.2 *1907 British topographic plan of acropolis area*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

had been taken over by domestic structures.[11] Also within this enclosure, a large mid-sixth century A.D. basilica, which by its very size suggests a fairly substantial population, saw several stages of embellishment and renovation stretching well into the tenth and eleventh centuries.[12] Finally, in the late tenth

11 Waywell 1999, 22. On the Slavic character of these later deposits, see Sanders 1995. According to A.D. Powell (1995), occupation in the theater cavea continued into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is likely that the later Roman domestic structures uncovered by Woodward at the top of the theater cavea in the area of the Chalkioikos Temple should probably are associated with this settlement. See Woodward and Hobling 1923–1925, 240–241 and Woodward 1926–1927, 37–38, 45–48.

12 For a discussion of the architectural evidence used in dating the basilica, see Βοκοτόπουλος 1975a, 1975b; Sweetman and Katsari 2002; Sweetman 2009; 2010, 220.

century, the two-story Roman Stoa was most likely converted into a monastic complex and its vaulted chambers became rooms used for burial and the liturgical needs of another church. This final phase of use, which has been tentatively tied to the Monastery of Ag. Nikon Metanoeites, lasted until the area was completely abandoned due to the transfer of the inhabitants of Sparta to nearby Mistra under William II de Villehardouin in A.D. 1249.[13] Thereafter, Sparta sees only squatter occupation until it was resettled in A.D. 1843 following the Greek War of Independence.

Previous Study of the Fortification at Sparta

In general, the early history of scholarly attention to the site of Sparta is dominated far more by topographical speculation than by excavation and study of the city's actual material record.[14] Nevertheless, two points of relevance to the present study appear with such consistency in the published accounts of the early travelers that they are worth mentioning here. First of all, these reports show that in several different locations the fortifications were once veneered in a wide assortment of inscriptions, sculptures, and recognizable elements of classical architecture.[15] In the words of Bory d. St. Vincent, these walls "peut passer pour un véritable galerie d' antiques, composée de somptueux débris des pompes de Sparte."[16] Secondly, when read in succession, these accounts trace the effects of the systematic use of this site and its walls as a quarry for building materials, especially following the establishment of the modern city. In this regard, Leake's suggestion that as a steady source of building materials, these fortifications continued to serve "as a protection from the hands of the masons to what may remain below the surface" offers an amusing, but very telling insight into the extent of reuse activities at the site in the modern era.[17] As in the case of Aegina, we may again justifiably ask whether the destruction of classical remains that is commonly assigned to later Roman builders might more accurately be attributed to our own more recent activities.

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13 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 387–389, 396–403, 424–429; Nicol 1998, 157–159.

14 For a summary of archaeological exploration of Laconia in general, see Bintliff 1977, 371–439 and Catling 1998.

15 The walls on the south side, especially near the theater and stoa are the most frequently mentioned, but Curtius (1851–1852, 220–222) also talks about the embellishment of the north sidewalls. Woodward's (1908–1909, 88–91) discussion of inscriptions previously uncovered by Fourmont to the north of the acropolis is relevant in this regard.

16 St. Vincent 1836, 420.

17 Leake 1968, 158.



FIGURE 4.3 *Late Roman Fortifications at the start of the British excavations in 1906*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

The intermittent archaeological excavation that has taken place at the site has rarely focused on the condition and appearance of the defensive walls as a subject of study in its own right.[18] As part of the first phase of investigations carried out by the British School at Athens beginning in 1906, R. Traquair surveyed the fortification and conducted a small excavation of an opening on its southern side. The results of his study, along W. Sejk's topographic plan of the site are still today the best evidence for the course and construction of the defensive circuit.[19] At the same time though, this initial survey was accompanied by a systematic effort to remove inscribed and sculpted blocks from the walls for preservation and further study. It would seem that the number of blocks extracted was quite large, for only in 1908 could A.M. Woodward state that,

18 Waywell and Wilkes (1994, 379–384) provide a summary of studies conducted at Sparta over the past century.

19 For Sejk's map, see Bosanquet 1905–1906a, 278, and Dawkins 1906–1907, 2. For the survey of the fortifications, see Traquair 1905–1906. In 1931, Αδαμαντίου (1931, 91–96) also traced the course of the walls as part of his overall investigation of the site, but the resulting publication does not provide a description or illustrations of his findings.

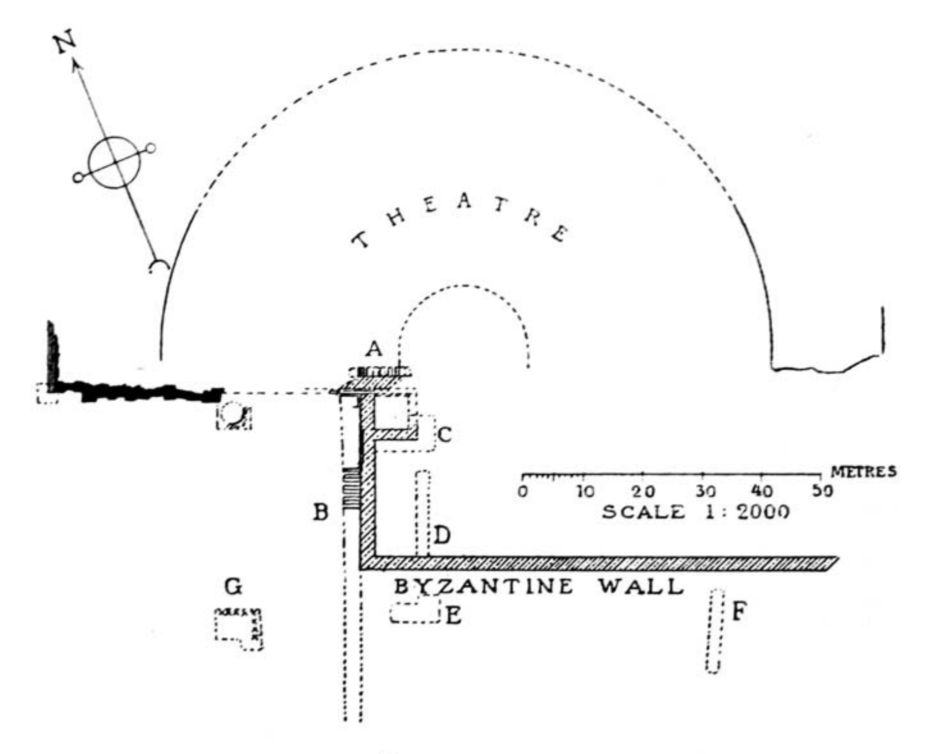


FIGURE 4.4 *Plan showing relation of later Roman walls to theater*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

> … the examination of the foundations of the late-Roman walls, which had yielded a plentiful crop of inscribed marbles in the three previous campaigns, was practically finished as regards the southern side, which, as being nearest to the Agora, was more likely to reward our search than the other sides. It seemed advisable, however, to continue the exploration of these walls on the eastern and northern faces, and this work was not fruitless, for, somewhat contrary to expectation, a large number of inscribed statue-bases of the Imperial age were found within a small area along the northern side of the walls.[20]

20 Woodward 1908–1909, 40.

Unfortunately, the exact location and orientation of this material was rarely recorded so that, aside from a few photographs, it is not possible to determine the original appearance of the wall in the affected areas.[21] The same could be said for the fortifications in the theater, where significant parts of the later walls first discovered in 1909 were completely removed in 1924–1925 in order to gain access to the western limits of the cavea.[22] A program of careful documentation did not precede the disassembly of the defenses here so that again our understanding of the use of *spolia* in this location must rely on the evidence of a few photographs and the parts of the walls that were left in place.

In contrast to these early excavations, the third and most recent phase of archaeological investigation, conducted under the direction of G.B. Waywell and J.J. Wilkes from 1988–1991 in the area of the Roman Stoa and from 1992–1998 in the theater has been marked by a much more systematic study and documentation of these monuments and their associated artifacts. In addition to the extensive publication of the ceramics, inscriptions, geomorphology, environmental and biological data, and even the petrographic study of the mortars used in construction, the British archaeologists have also reported on the discovery of an additional stretch of the later Roman wall just off the southwestern corner of the Roman Stoa.[23] Most significantly, the ceramic evidence recovered in the process of excavating this wall, "seems very much to favour an original construction date late in the fourth century, whether occasioned by the earthquake of 375 or the arrival of Alaric in 396, or a mixture of both."[24]

Finally, these various excavations at the site have also shown that these later fortifications must have provided a strong and secure defense for the inhabitants of later Roman and Byzantine Sparta. For the presence of the Christian basilica as well as domestic structures of post-classical date in the theater, the Roman Stoa, and beneath the modern football field just to the south of the site together suggest that the city continued to thrive well into the 12th century A.D.[25]

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21 See Tillyard (1905–1906), who lists fourteen inscriptions as having been found in the "Byzantine Wall." According to Dawkins (1907–1908), inscriptions nos. 48–60 were recovered from the late Roman walls.

22 Dickins 1906–1907; Woodward 1923–1925a; 1923–1925b; 1924; 1925.

23 Bailey 1993; Sanders 1993; Spawforth 1994; Hayes 1995; Sanders 1995; Waywell and Walker 1995; Chandler 1997; Sidell and Wilkinson 1997; Pickersgill and Roberts 2003.

24 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 423. This would confirm Gregory's (1982b) suggestion of a fifth century date for this fortification. See also Bouras 1981, 622 and Gregory 1992.

25 For the Christian Basilica, see Sweetman and Katsara 2002 and Sweetman 2009. For

Description of the Late Roman Fortification

The later fortification wall at Sparta encircles a low hill that rises gradually out of the plain to the north of the modern city. To its immediate northeast and northwest, the transition from the this hill down to the Eurotas River valley below is naturally steeper, while on the other sides, the more gentle slope of the terrain has been augmented by a number of man-made structures. The cavea of the enormous theater and its massive retaining wall marks the western side of the plateau, while the rear wall of the large Roman Stoa forms its southeastern corner. In between, the remains of the Round Building, a semi-circular structure built of rough ashlar masonry, dominates the approach from the south. Within these natural and man-made boundaries, the surface of the acropolis itself slopes upward gradually toward the west, reaching its highest point atop the rounded hill just behind the remains of the theater. Another small summit is located in the northeast and the area in between these two points forms a roughly level saddle.

In spite of its use as a source of material for local builders and epigraphers alike, the defensive barrier can still be traced for most of its course. With the exception of the Roman Stoa, builders founded the wall atop pre-existing structures or else incorporated parts of buildings into the fabric of the defenses. In addition, the circuit follows a course that takes every possible strategic advantage of the local terrain to supplement its height and defensive capabilities. Where they have been revealed, the foundations are built of large blocks, two courses high and thicker than the wall itself. When the wall has been placed at the bottom of a slope, it is equipped with provisions for draining any water that might accumulate behind it.[26] The upper sections of the fortification are constructed with a mortar and rubble core, faced on the exterior in large ashlars, recycled from earlier buildings. The impressive variety of reused material has already been mentioned, but it is still worth noting that R. Traquair listed “cipollino, pavonazzo, verde antico, purple, a red breccia marble, and a fine white and purple marble from Taygetus” among the thirteen different types of

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the excavation of domestic structures in the theater, see Woodward 1923a; 1926–1927; Χρήστου,1961/2; Waywell and Wilkes 1995, 435–447 and Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker 1998. For the Roman Stoa, see Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 384–393, 414–432. For the area beneath the modern football field, see Nichols 1950, 282–298. For the ceramic evidence, see Sanders 1993; Hayes 1995; Sanders 1995 and Pickersgill and Roberts 2003.

26 Archaeologists identified drains of different construction in the areas of the South Gate, near the Round building and the Roman Stoa as well as in the area of the theater. Traquair 1905–1906, 423 and fig. 8.

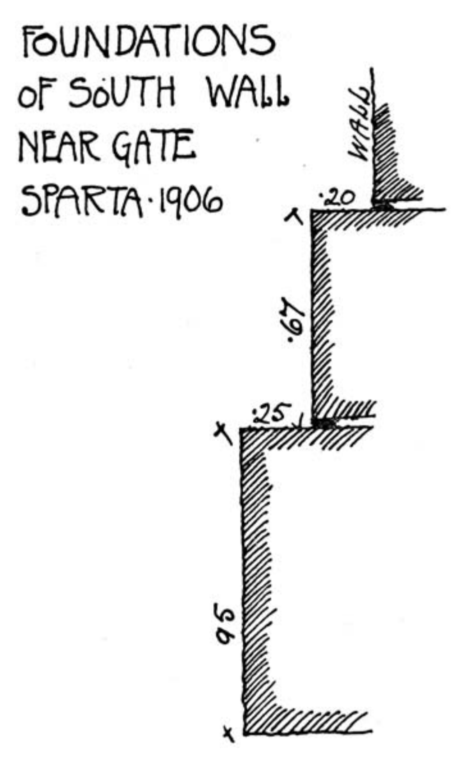


FIGURE 4.5 *R. Traquair's illustration of the foundations of the fortifications near the South Gate*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

stone he identified in his study.[27] The appearance of the interior face is not as well understood, either because it is buried beneath soil eroded from the higher ground within or because it has been completely stripped away. Where it can be seen, the inside of the wall is most often composed of the same material as the core, yet given a smoother finish and at times also a bonding course of bricks. In most places, the wall measures 3.8 m in thickness, yet in a few locations, it is noticeably thinner (only 2–2.6 m thick). The extant towers project fully on three sides, and are therefore entered at ground level from the rear by means of a doorway through the thickness of the wall.

In general, the southern side of the fortress has been studied at far greater length than that on the north and it is therefore easiest to trace its course

27 Traquair, 1905–1906, 423.

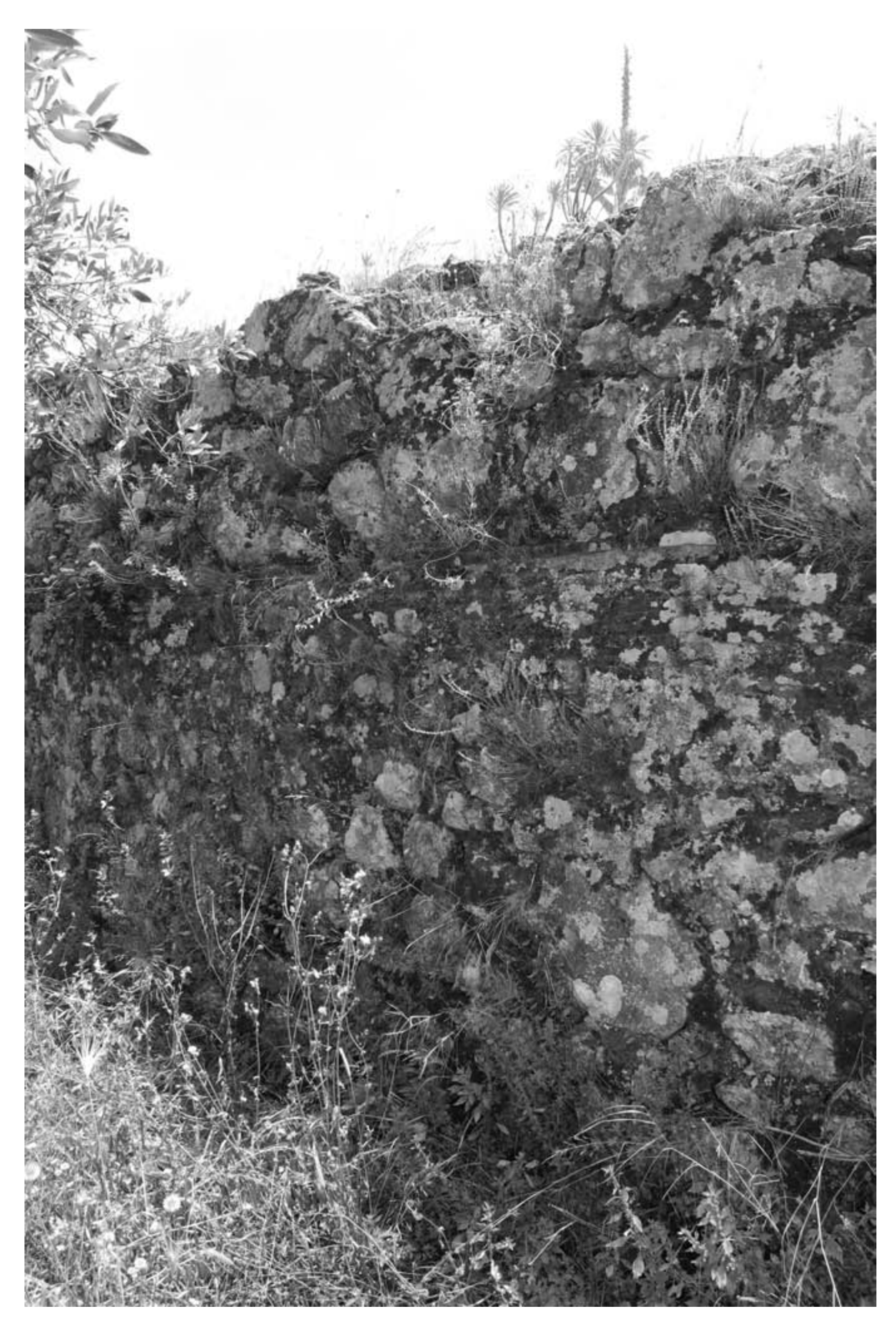


FIGURE 4.6 *Interior face of south wall of fortification from north*
PHOTO J. FREY



FIGURE 4.7 *Exterior face of south wall of fortifications from southeast*
PHOTO J. FREY

between the Roman Stoa and theater. Beginning at the modern paved entrance to the archaeological site, the thick mass of the wall heads west in a straight line, turning only slightly to the north at a point Traquair identified as Tower E in order to fall into line with the southern face of the theater stage building. Nearly

all of the outer shell has been stripped away along this stretch leaving only the mortar and rubble core, but a few fragments of large marble blocks left in situ suggest that its façade originally contained a significant amount of *spolia* in a wide variety of colors, shapes and sizes. Along this stretch Traquair identified two sets of piers representing doorways into a pre-existing building blocked off at the time of construction (points D and F), a small opening near the east end of the theater, also built up, and the remains of a "brick-lined Roman vault" in the area of Tower E.[28]

The fortifications are badly preserved to the immediate southwest of the theater, but when the wall makes a turn to the north to follow the western side of the Roman stage building, it is easily recognized. A huge mass of mortar and rubble marks the southern end of this short section, just to the north of which is one of the more impressive segments of the defenses still preserved today. Here, a series of seven marble blocks of equal height and thickness, all adorned with traces of bucrania, garlands, and circular bosses are stacked side by side atop a pre-existing limestone foundation.[29] The three northernmost of the blocks clearly belong together and the bucrania that have been chiseled away at the corners of the first and third blocks from the north suggest that these represent the full width of a structure associated with the theater, perhaps even the in situ remains of the Roman stage building. The four other blocks to the south have been placed together in an attempt to continue the pattern, but missing segments have produced a disjointed sequence. To the north and south of this series of decorative slabs, builders placed other carved marbles, including Ionic order frieze blocks, one with a *cyma reversa*, and a ceiling coffer.

While the 1906 excavations had uncovered traces of a much earlier east-west running roadway outside the wall just to the south of these blocks, it was not until 1926–1927 that a western gate was actually identified, thus establishing the presence of an entrance to the fortress in this location.[30] This gate appears to have been given an even more decorative appearance than the existing sequence of recycled blocks would suggest. In 1906, G. Dickins noted the discovery of a number of architraves, columns, and Corinthian capitals just outside the walls in this area. "The position in which the fragments were found shews that they must have been arranged symmetrically in the Byzantine wall.

28 Traquair, 1905–1906, 423.

29 Dickins 1906–1907, 396–398.

30 Woodward 1925–1926, 175, 202, and pl. XXVII; 1926–1927, 18; Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 422; Κουρίνου 2000, 64.



FIGURE 4.8 *Rubble and mortar core of later Roman wall at southwest corner of theater stage building from north*
PHOTO J. FREY

Two of the columns were observed still standing in front of the Byzantine wall by Leroy and the French Expedition."[31]

At the same time, this entrance was also heavily guarded. Plans from the 1906 excavations indicate the presence of a large square structure positioned immediately southwest of the theater orchestra and abutting the inside face of the north-south wall where it meets the western parodos wall. While the initial report lists the structure as a two-story Byzantine house, it is more likely that this was a tower.[32] Most recently, archaeologists have uncovered reused blocks associated with this structure in the lower cavea of the theater beneath a thick layer of later fill.[33]

At the point where this tower had once stood, the north-south running wall meets the pre-existing retaining wall of the theater's western parodos at a right angle, incorporating the wedge-shaped end of the cavea in the defenses. It

31 Dickins 1906–1907, 400.

32 Dickins 1906–1907, 404.

33 Powell 1995, 446.



FIGURE 4.9 *Fortifications south of theater from north*
PHOTO J. FREY

would seem that the later Roman builders simply founded their wall atop the remains of the theater, for when Woodward's team disassembled the fortification, they revealed "ten rows of seats in position, and ... twenty steps alongside them."[34]

At the western end of the cavea, the fortification wall turns again toward the north to follow the west retaining wall of the theater and then north along the steep edge of the hill at the western end of the acropolis.[35] From this point, Traquair was able to trace the wall as it circled around the highest point of the acropolis. According to his report, the wall here was "polygonal in plan," and equipped with both semicircular and square towers at the angles.[36] It does

34 Woodward 1925, 214. It is worth noting that Woodward (1927–1928) gives the location and in one case, the orientation of the inscriptions he removed in demolishing the wall. Inscription #56 (2918) was not facing outwards from the north-south wall west of the stage building and was only revealed upon extraction.

35 Woodward 1925–1926, 177–178.

36 Traquair 1905–1906, 425. Traquair also concluded that since the towers in this section were semi-circular and imperfectly bonded the to wall, they were of later date than the original defenses.



FIGURE 4.10 *Leroy's illustration of the theater area*
FROM LE ROY 1758, PL. XIII

not appear that this area was equipped with a gate, nor does this section of the wall form a separately enclosed smaller circuit. It is perhaps of interest that Traquair found this area to be particularly devoid of inscriptions or identifiable architectural fragments.

Having almost completely encircled the northwestern hill, the wall makes an abrupt turn toward the northeast and traces the top of the northern slope of the acropolis as it curves gradually back toward the north. Traquair mentions a large section near the western end of this northern stretch that still contained "a great number of columns used as bonding-stones through the thickness of the wall."[37] If this is the same section as that located just to the east of the modern paved roadway through the site, then the wall has suffered a great deal over the last century. Even though it is still preserved to an impressive height, today only the rubble core of this section remains.

Further to the east, the wall turns sharply toward the southeast. Although usually no more than two courses appear above the surface, here the wall and part of a square tower can be identified with ease. The reuse of architectural elements is also much more easily observed, confirming Traquair's observation that, "on the north side the walls seem also to have been faced throughout with

37 Traquair 1905–1906, 425.

squared blocks and architectural fragments have been found everywhere."[38] However as the surface slopes down into a valley and up again to the promontory marked "N," the wall is reduced to a few traces of small stones and an irregular line of mounded soil. It is here that Traquair identified a "large central tower (M) … almost completely built of architrave, frieze, and cornice fragments of some small late Roman building of the Corinthian order."[39] Just to the east of this point, are located the northeast corner and northern gate of the citadel, both of which are difficult to identify today.[40]

When the defensive wall reaches this northeastern promontory, it cuts southward at a right angle and follows the upper edge of the ridge that marks the eastern side of the acropolis. The tumbled remains of a tower, which still preserves traces of a rear entrance, mark the point at which the wall turns again and heads directly toward the southeast corner of the citadel. Traquair's suggestion that a gate was located in this area may be confirmed by the curious arrangement of walls in this location on a different plan drawn by members of the French Expedition.[41] A little further south along this stretch is located the well-preserved section of the wall (labeled R on the British plan) that forms the object of the present case study.

Just before the wall reaches the southeast corner of the enclosure, it passes the two vaulted chambers that form the eastern face of the earlier Roman Stoa. These two rooms were built into the defensive circuit and their mass of brick and masonry was turned into a tower. Concerning the different phases of construction and the changing function of this section, Traquair's description is not entirely clear. "The end of the Stoa is faced with large squared stones up to the springing of the arches, above that, with triangular bricks; to the front the stone-facing has been carried up the whole height of the wall, a storey higher than the existing remains of the Stoa. Between this and the south-east angle is an opening leading into the street in front of the Stoa, flanked to the south by a square tower, now built up."[42] Although the present condition of this part of the wall does not allow for much clarification, it would seem that this southeastern entrance was part of the original construction of the fortifications and with its powerful towers was meant to complement the west gate in front of the theater.

38 Traquair 1906.

39 Traquair 1905–1906, 426.

40 Only a couple of years ago, E. Κουρνίου (2000, 65) was able to find a roadbed but was prohibited by the dense brush from confirming whether it was paved.

41 Traquair 1905–1906, 427.

42 Traquair 1905–1906, 420. See also Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 384.

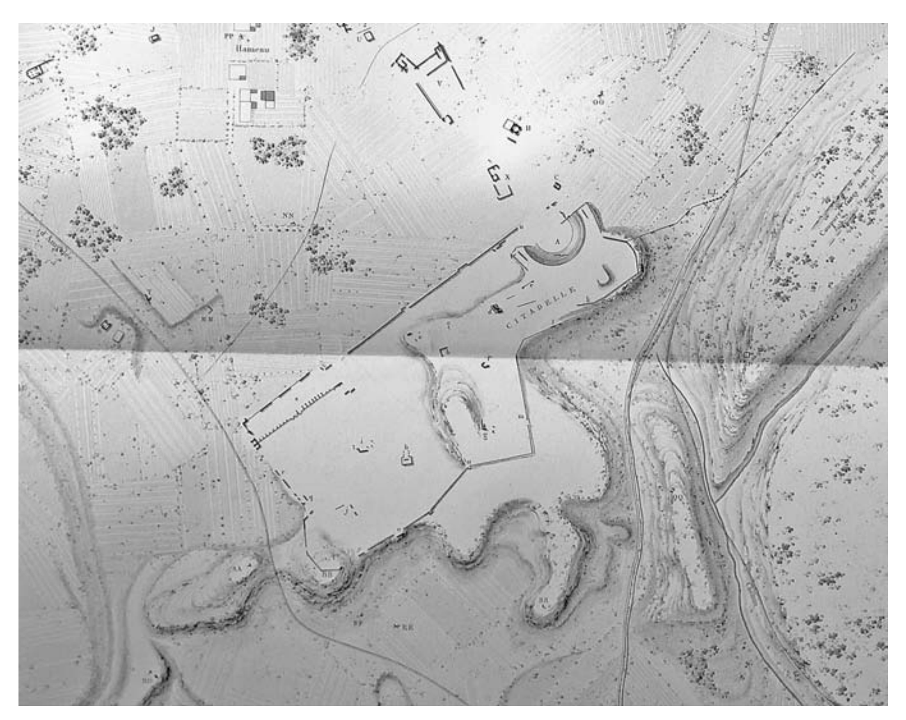


FIGURE 4.11 *French Expedition plan of acropolis area showing possible eastern entrances at bottom left side of enclosure*
FROM BLOUET 1831, PL. 46

An external tower extends southward from the face of the south wall and marks the southeast corner of the fortifications. The rear entrance to this tower appears to have been excavated at some time in the past and its construction from recycled columns and other large architectural elements is clearly visible today.[43] From this point the defensive wall traces a course that is approximately 40 meters distant from and roughly parallel to the face of the Roman Stoa, yet diverges slightly from this line toward its western end. Along this stretch, four more external towers can be identified in addition to the one just described.

At the western end of this southern wall, just to the east of the modern entrance to the site, Traquair excavated a small gate flanked by two towers. He believed this entrance to be a later addition to the fortress designed to replace the walled up gate at the southeastern corner of the acropolis. As evidence, he noted that the tower west of this gate not only disturbed "the symmetry of the

43 Traquair 1905–1906, 420.

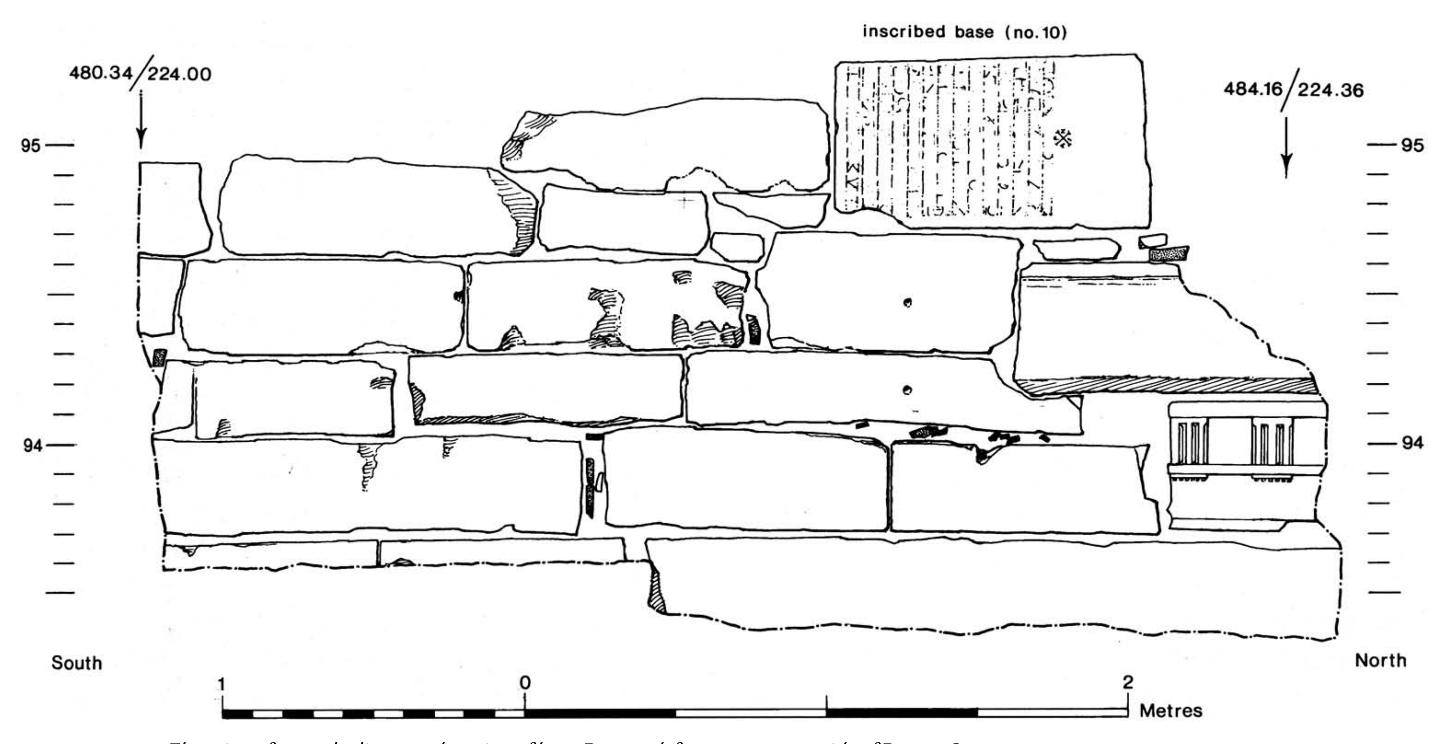


FIGURE 4.12 *Elevation of recently discovered section of later Roman defenses near west side of Roman Stoa*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

wall in front of the Stoa," but also appeared to be of lesser quality construction than other towers in the defensive enclosure.[44] This South Gate is only three meters wide and is paved with a rough assortment of reused stones with numerous wide gaps and spaces in between. Neither of these characteristics are what one might expect from the main southern entrance to the citadel in late antiquity. Furthermore, just to the west of this point, there is an abrupt shift of the course of the wall to include a section that, at two meters in thickness and lacking an ashlar façade, is noticeably different from other sections of the fortification.

The more recent discovery of a new section of the fortification wall oriented north-south and meeting up with the western terminus of the Roman Stoa, suggests a new interpretation. According to the excavators, a "… southward continuation of this [wall's] line would meet the E-W wall fronting the stoa precisely on the W side of the point where Traquair located the second gate and flanking tower of the 1906 excavations."[45] At three meters in thickness and featuring an eastern façade built from reused columns, inscriptions and part of a Doric frieze, this wall is a much better match with the majority of the extant remains of the enclosure.[46] Thus, excavators have suggested that this part of the later Roman fortification actually represents two different phases of construction. In the initial stage, this newly discovered section formed part of a re-entrant to the principal gate into the acropolis. Then, "at a later date the re-entrant was closed off by the later section of narrow wall, and a new gate was constructed at its E end."[47] As to the date of this later renovation, the archaeologists have suggested the period when "Byzantine Sparta … flourished between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, before dwindling away as Mistra supplanted it on account of its superior defensive location."[48]

While it does provide a more simplified chronology, based in part on the evidence of material recovered by excavation, this new interpretation is not without its problems. First, it has been argued that, instead of incorporating the southern vaulted façade of the Roman Stoa into the defensive circuit, the Roman builders opted to erect an entirely separate stretch of wall some 40 meters to the south in order to incorporate the road running along the southern

44 Traquair 1905–1906, 420.
45 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 421.
46 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 392.
47 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 421.
48 Waywell 1999, 6.

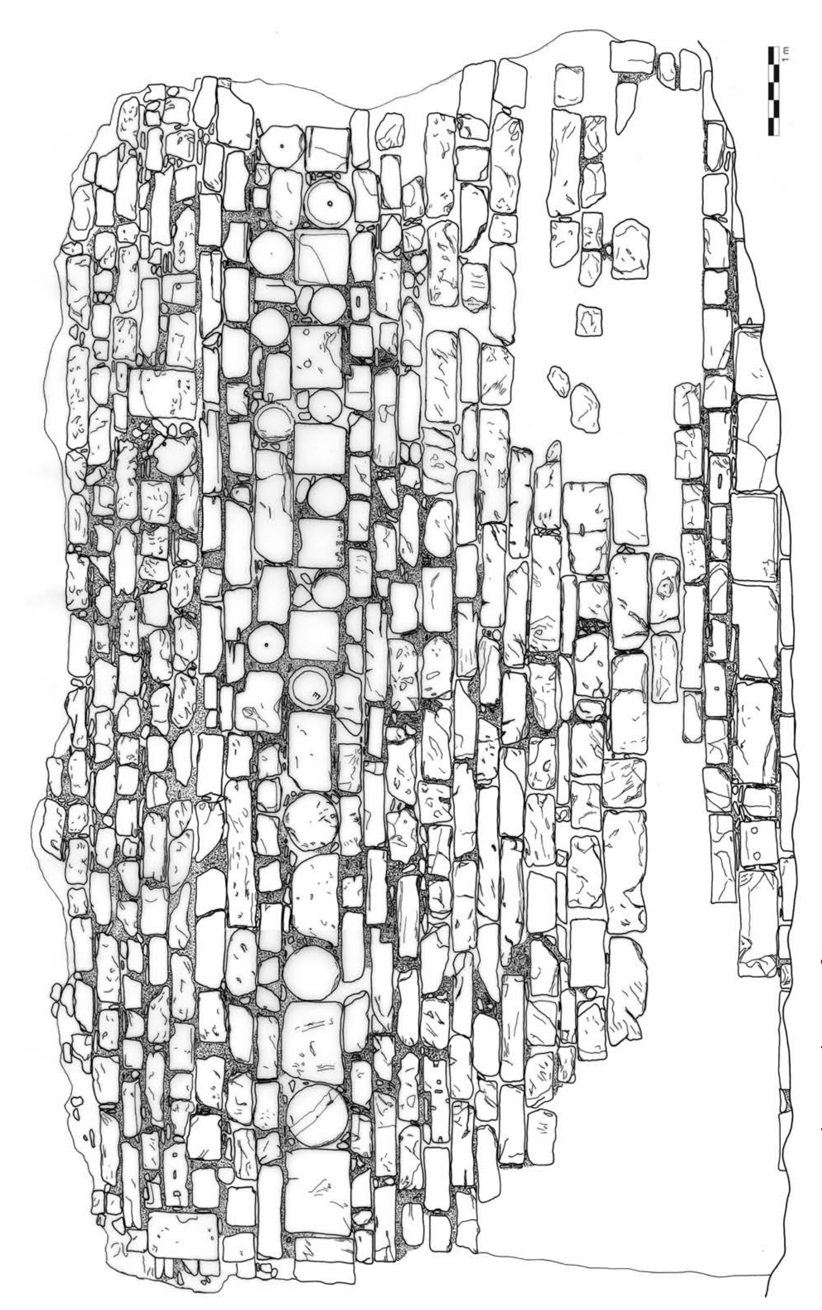


FIGURE 4.13 *Elevation drawing of Section R*
DRAWING J. FREY

slope of the acropolis between the stoa and the theater.[49] Yet if this had been the planners' intention, the recently exposed section of wall stretching in a north-south direction from the South Gate to the Roman Stoa would have interrupted any free passage along this roadway. In addition, this new reconstruction fails to take into account the fact that, unlike the majority of the defensive circuit where the exterior face is the spoliated surface, here the eastern side of the wall is the one constructed of recycled architecture. If, as has been proposed, this new wall formed the east side of a re-entrant to the original South Gate, then the recycled blocks are facing the wrong way.

Description of "Section R"

At a height of over eight meters, the nearly 14 meter long stretch of fortification wall labeled "Section R" towers over the level terrain to the east of the Spartan acropolis. It has been strategically positioned at the edge of a low north-south oriented ridge and today continues to hold back the earth that has elsewhere eroded down from the acropolis so that the ground level behind the wall is over three and a half meters higher than in front. Standing before the wall, it is easy to see that the gently curving "U" shape of the surface at its base results from the soil washing around the broken edges to its north and south.

While this eroded soil has completely obscured both the foundations of Section R and any physical connection they may have to the rest of the fortification, the position and orientation of the wall here leave little doubt that it once formed an integral part of the original defenses. By following the small ridge toward the south, one soon encounters the massive towers built up around the eastern end of the Roman stoa. To the north, the gentle rise in terrain leads to the crumbling remains of another tower, now largely stripped of its facing material. What does remain of the ashlar face of this tower to the north, and other nearby parts of the southern enclosure wall make it clear that, in terms of construction technique and use of materials, Section R differs little from other parts of the circuit wall in general and should be dated to its initial phase of construction.

This section of wall appears the same today as when the first travelers and archaeologists published images of the Spartan acropolis. The eastern ashlar

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49 Indeed, traces of this road have been recovered in excavations dating back to 1906. See Traquair 1905–1906, 428; Dickins 1905–1906, 432, Woodward 1925–1926, 175, 202, pl. XXVII; 1926–1927, 18.



FIGURE 4.14 *Section R from east at the time of the first British expedition in 1906*
COURTESY BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

façade and an extensive portion of the structure behind it have been destroyed in such a way that large, triangular sections of both are missing at the bottom northern and southern ends of the wall. Today, these lower sections have been replaced with modern masonry, which has obscured most of the wall's original construction. On the northern side near the bottom of the wall, a few blocks jut out from this background of recent repair and suggest that the appearance of the defenses in these missing areas matched the rest of Section R.

Like most other walls of the period, this section is constructed with a rubble and mortar core, faced with an outer layer of heavy ashlars.[50] The core of the wall itself is composed of a wide variety of broken marble architectural elements, chunks of limestone, and rounded river stones embedded in a thick mass of hard, beige mortar. Where visible, the core does not show clear signs of any horizontal layering to suggest more discreet stages of construction. Only at one point, high up on the wall's broken northern edge, is it possible

50 For general studies of later Roman construction techniques and their dependence on earlier traditions, see Vann 1976; Johnson 1983a and Foss and Winfield 1986.



FIGURE 4.15 *Detail of composition of rubble and mortar core*
PHOTO J. FREY

to see two faint horizontal lines that may suggest points at which the core was allowed to dry and harden before construction of the wall continued. These lines, however, do not appear to carry through to the other sides of the wall.



FIGURE 4.16 *Northern half of rear face of Section R from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

Unfortunately, general decay and the presence of at least two different phases of later masonry have made it nearly impossible to determine the original appearance of the rear face of the wall. The modern repairs are easily identified as they wrap around the roughly broken northern and southern ends of Section R. In addition, along the northern half of the rear side a different type of masonry, characterized by the use of smaller, rounded stones and a large quantity of tiles set into place in no particular order, bears a striking resemblance to the wall recently identified as a later modification to the acropolis defenses.[51] On the other hand, whatever type of material once covered the southern half has been completely stripped away, leaving only the rubble and mortar core. In just a few locations, the faintest traces of impressions left by blocks are visible, but nowhere are they clear enough to allow any conclusions as to the size and shape of the facing materials. At a point midway along the backside of the wall at ground level, the soil has been churned up to reveal two horizontal courses of bricks. The later repairs have been erected atop this brick course and are

51 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 420–421.

finished flush with its outer face. However, because the associated stone blocks below this line of bricks appear to be squared and set into place in level courses, it is unlikely that this is part of the same construction. Only excavation of the area can resolve this issue, but it is possible that this is the original rear face of Section R. Thus, it seems likely that the wall once had a rear face and that the rubble core was not built up against the earth embankment itself.

All in all, the font side of Section R contains well over twenty level courses of ashlar blocks. At points along the northern two thirds of the bottom of the structure, up to four courses of marble blocks are in a good state of preservation. Above this, only two rough limestone ashlars remain in place, but the remainder of the preserved ashlar façade grows incrementally wider with height. By the time the wall reaches four meters in elevation, it is again completely faced in stone masonry. At its top, the facing breaks off along a generally level line, yet traces of the rubble and mortar core jut upward at intervals to suggest that at one time, the wall continued even higher.

One curious feature on the upper third of the wall's western face defies an easy explanation. Just to the right of the break that marks the southernmost extent of Section R, the front of the wall cuts back at a right angle to form a small recessed area. The corresponding rear face does not appear to share this change and as such, the wall thins here. When viewed from the side, this cut is angled back slightly from the flat face of the wall. It is approximately 0.24 m deep at its lowest preserved point, but closer to the top, it has grown to about 0.32 m. The southeastern corner of the lowest block that still shows this feature is carved away at a right angle in order to create this recess. The remainder of the face above this block is formed from the careful arrangement of recycled stones smoothed with mortar. The wall's state of preservation at this point makes it impossible to determine whether this recessed area represents some type of thin vertical channel or a much more extensive change in thickness. Given the fact that at 2.6 m, Section R is already thinner than the other parts of the defensive circuit, (usually 3.8 m), a further reduction in the width would be a particularly curious feature. At the same time though, it is difficult to understand what purpose a step or small channel in the façade would have served.

The blocks that form the eastern façade come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and are arranged in level courses and held in place with a number of small stones, bricks, and ceramic fragments. Uniquely, long, thin strips of roughly striated dark grey schist appear frequently as chinking between the ashlars. On occasion, larger gaps between blocks have been filled with an assortment of all these materials and then mortared into place and given a smooth finish flush with the face of the wall. The mortar varies in composition, but in general



FIGURE 4.17 *Section R from the south showing difference in elevation between front and back of wall. Note also change in thickness of wall near top of front façade*
PHOTO J. FREY



FIGURE 4.18 *Detail view of fragments of schist used to fill spaces between blocks*
PHOTO J. FREY

is a light tan aggregate containing a large proportion of rounded pebbles and sand.[52] Where it has been exposed to the elements, this mortar has weathered to a darker grey and at times is nearly indistinguishable from the ashlars themselves.

Sources of Material

In general, builders used either marble or limestone in the façade of Section R. The limestone blocks are generally of such low quality and in such a weathered state that it is no longer possible to distinguish any signs of prior use. In only a few cases do these ashlars continue to exhibit squared corners or straight edges and there is no way to rule out the possibility that these stones were quarried for this project and are in their first and only phase of use. On the other hand, it would appear that masons selected the vast majority of the marble blocks from a group of previously damaged buildings and smaller monuments near the city center. The variety of recycled materials here is impressive. Most obviously, columns have been set in place perpendicular to the face of the wall so that the viewer can clearly distinguish the round shape of the shafts across the entire width of Section R. On the southern half of the façade, these columns form an alternating sequence with a number of square limestone blocks, while on the northern half the square blocks are of marble. At least one of these blocks carries a partially preserved inscription along its lower edge that shows that it now rests on its side. Other marbles in this series, as well as some blocks in the lower courses, were once bases for statues and smaller monuments. Elsewhere on the wall, ashlars exhibit unusual shapes or else show cuttings for clamps that serve no purpose in their present orientation and thus mark them as recycled materials. Most frequently, the presence of anathyrosis on the outward facing side of a number of ashlars serves as a clear indication of secondary use. In spite of these many signs of prior use though, it is not possible to determine any one specific type of architectural element, as was the case with the Doric epistyle-frieze block discovered in recent excavations near the Roman Stoa.[53]

More interestingly, a number of these marble blocks reveal traces of damage that must have occurred before their use in the later Roman defenses. To begin

52 For a brief analysis of the high quality mortar used in the fortifications near the theater, see Chandler 1997.

53 Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 421.



FIGURE 4.19 *Detail of inscription oriented sideways and partly worn away from east*
PHOTO J. FREY

with, some of the reused ashlars show signs of weathering in locations that have been protected ever since they were placed in this wall. Likewise, the base moldings on columns are generally chipped and worn in such a way that likely would not have occurred after the construction of this fortification. In addition, the upper sections of the wall contain a large proportion of blocks that, because of the partial presence of anathyrosis or recognizable outlines, can be identified as badly broken architectural elements. Masons filled the spaces left by their irregular profiles with small stones and mortar in order to make the missing sections flush with the rest of the wall. Since the mortar used in these locations is contiguous with that surrounding the nearby blocks, it is unlikely that these repairs date to a time after the initial construction of the defenses.

The fact that the ashlars of the wall's façade are still embedded within the rubble core and cannot be measured on all sides makes it difficult to determine the number and type of monuments that were recycled for construction. Nevertheless, the measurements that can be recorded on the accessible faces of the ashlars do not reveal heights or lengths of sufficient consistency to conclude that any one building in particular served as the main source of building material. Moreover, the few examples that do share similar dimensions are

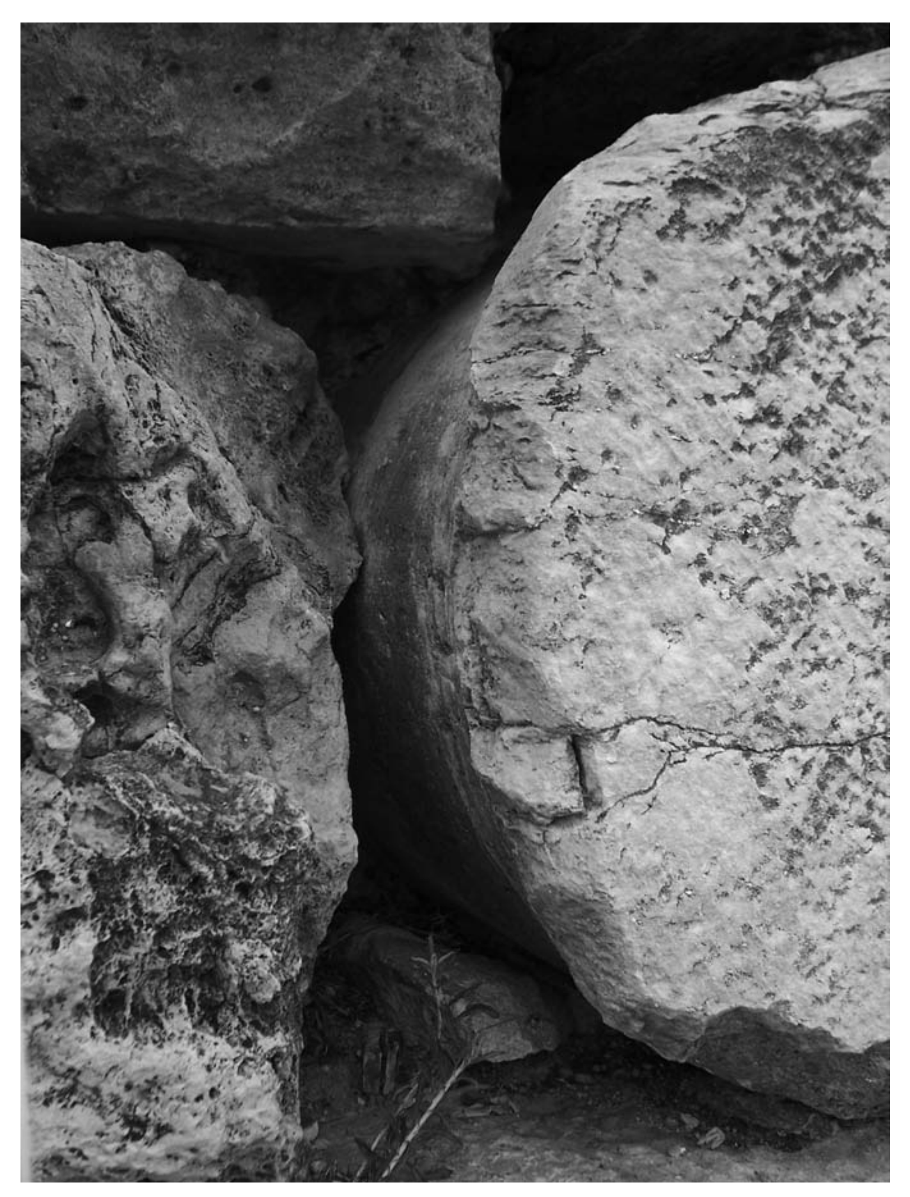


FIGURE 4.20 *Detail of column shaft with evidence of damage in protected surfaces*
PHOTO J. FREY

positioned in various locations throughout the face of the wall. Thus, it is likely that if these ashlars did come from the same source, they were not kept together as a group when they arrived at the site of construction. The marble columns that were used in the wall serve as the clearest illustration. While the three

southernmost columns all share remarkably similar diameters (0.65–0.69 m), each differs in color and carving technique to such a degree that it is unlikely that they form a matched set. Alternately, of the fifteen columns that are used in this section of the fortification, only two share the same style of fluting and anathyrosis. Yet, at 0.53 m and 0.45 m, the diameters of these relatively small columns may be too different to allow for changes due to entasis or diminution.

The damaged condition and the variety of the *spolia* used in this wall suggest that the construction of this section of the fortification was preceded by a widespread destruction of buildings and monuments from various parts of the site. Certainly, the earthquake of A.D. 375 as well as the A.D. 396 Gothic attack are both events that could have rendered a large number of buildings and monuments no longer fit for use. Yet, it is also important to keep in mind that some of the damage may have occurred through the demolition of previously abandoned structures for use as a quarry.[54] In any case, as the study of construction techniques will show, builders met the challenges of working with this wide variety of battered and broken materials with the same type ingenuity and creativity as has traditionally been attributed solely to work in contemporary Christian monumental architecture.

Late Roman Construction Techniques

In many ways, the excellent state of preservation exhibited by the unexcavated remains of Section R hinders a complete analysis of the techniques employed in its construction. The lowest courses that are visible here show no signs of thickening and are flush with the overall façade of the wall. Assuming the masons here built their wall atop wider foundations in a similar fashion to that observed on the south side of the enclosure, we must conclude that the lowest courses of the wall still lie beneath the surface.[55] It should be noted though, that the second course of blocks from the bottom—and the first fully visible course on the wall in its present state—is noticeably taller than nearly all other courses. Perhaps this layer represents an orthostate row, yet this cannot be verified without excavation.

Furthermore, the fact that the rear faces of the ashlars used here are almost completely inaccessible prevents any thorough study of the orientation of the

54 Such is also the conclusion of Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 122.

55 Traquair 1905–1906, 424; Wilkes and Waywell 1994, 421.

blocks in the wall. However, other, more general features of Section R do seem to point to the use of header and stretcher courses in construction. First of all, certain blocks are of such length that it seems quite likely that they stretch significantly further across the wall's face than they project into its core. For example, most of the blocks in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth courses from the bottom would seem to be examples of stretchers. The same might be said for the fifteenth (at least on the southern half of the wall) and twentieth courses (at least on the northern half). Secondly, on the northern side of the wall near the bottom, a row of marble blocks is still visible in the midst of extensive modern repair. The face of each has been roughly broken away, but their unique preservation in spite of this damage must be due to the fact that builders set these ashlars in place as headers. Other groups of blocks in the third and fourth courses from the bottom share a similar arrangement and appearance. The course that is immediately below the row of alternating columns and square ashlars is particularly noteworthy in this respect and it may be in preparation for laying this next course that the masons set blocks in place as headers across the entire width of the wall. Likewise, the courses that lie immediately above the rows containing columns may also represent headers set in place in order to cap off the top of these unique courses in the wall.

Finally, when viewed from the side, the broken northern end of Section R shows that builders likely arranged the ashlars in rows of alternating thickness so that the façade might bind more securely to the rubble core. The mortar just to the north of the two courses containing columns still preserves the negative impression of blocks that have long since fallen away. Here one can clearly see that the ashlar that had once occupied the lower of these two courses was more deeply embedded in the core of the wall than the one used in the next course above. In addition, northernmost column in the upper course shows no signs of weakening and must extend into the thickness of the wall for quite some distance. In this respect, one could also point to each of the columns as examples of recycled elements used to tie the face of the wall to the mortar and rubble core. For all appear to have been monolithic and in spite of the fact that they can no longer be fully intact—none pass all the way through the 2.6 m thick wall—their original height must have been of much larger dimensions than any of the blocks with which they alternate in sequence.

Given such limited information about the full dimensions of each component of the wall, it is difficult to speculate further about any potential system of headers and stretchers. It is, however, possible to observe the fact that the masons do not appear to have been concerned about staggering the vertical joints between blocks in this wall. Vertical seams are frequently repeated between two and sometimes, three courses. Furthermore, the presence of



FIGURE 4.21 *Detail of negative impression of ashlar blocks in mortar from north*
PHOTO J. FREY

staggered vertical seams only grows less common with every added course of masonry.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that, in spite of the diversity of materials used in the construction of this wall, builders were generally successful in

maintaining level horizontal surfaces between individual courses in the wall. The fact that a large proportion of the ashlars, both limestone and marble, have a common height in the range of one quarter to one third of a meter suggests that the materials used in this section of the defenses were selected according to a predetermined standard. Yet the presence of some courses in which the builders consistently used even thinner or thicker blocks hints at a relatively sophisticated system of sorting and preparation of the ashlars at the time of construction as well. It is clear that this was done in order to speed and simplify the process of building. Given the fact that the outer shell of ashlars is backed by a mass of rubble and mortar, masons could hide differences in the length or width of the ashlars by allowing the rear side of each element to project into the core to different depths. In fact, such irregularity is a desired trait, inasmuch as it serves to securely bind the face to the core of the wall.

However, if builders had allowed block heights to vary widely within a single course the task of building the wall becomes much more complex. The resulting jagged horizontal seam between rows would require that masons either find blocks that match the length of each gap or, in order to avoid the structurally weaker repetition of vertical seams, cut sections out of each block to make them fit. Given the fact that these materials are not being hoisted into place by means of lifting bosses or other devices, the careful fitting of blocks into place and the occasional repositioning and resetting that uneven courses of masonry would require must have been a most unwelcome prospect.

Having carefully selected ashlars and set them into place, builders then used smaller stones and tiles in order to smooth any irregularities and to create a level bedding surface for the next course. The arrangement of these smaller fragments in a number of different locations on the wall show that this was a common practice. Because the ashlars in some locations are now missing, the upper surface of the southernmost blocks of the lowest course and the northernmost blocks of the third course above the surface give a good indication of the appearance of these lower courses just before the next row of ashlars was set in place. More convincingly, the decision to use columns in the wall left the upper surface of the seventeenth and eighteenth courses with a decidedly irregular shape. Therefore, builders used fragments of tile, stone and pottery to bring gaps on either side of the rounded columns up to the level of the rectilinear blocks to their right and left. The upper edge of this course on the southern half of the wall is particularly telling, for here small chips of stone preserve traces of the line along which the bedding course for the next layer was prepared.



FIGURE 4.22 *Detail of small stones and tiles used to create level bedding for next course*
PHOTO J. FREY

A Reinterpretation? Shape, Color and the Doric Style

While it is not as apparent as in the previous example at Aegina, it is still the case that builders here at Sparta met the challenges inherent in the use of such a variety of material through the careful selection and placement of ashlars in level courses throughout the wall. Yet the inconsistent application of traditional building techniques suggests that masons here may have been motivated by a different set of concerns. Indeed, for the large number of travelers who approached the fortified Spartan acropolis from the northeast it is all too clear that the careful selection of recycled materials for Section R went far beyond a concern with the wall's structural integrity.[56] For the appearance of this segment of the defenses shows that its builders also were interested in creating

56 Brief discussions of roadways around and approaches to the acropolis can be found in Dickins 1905–1906, 432; 1906–1907, 398–400; Woodward 1925–1926, 175, 202, and pl. XXVII; 1926–1927, 18; Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 430–431; Piper 1986, 181–182 and Waywell 1999, 14–15.

a visually appealing monument through the use of alternations in color and shape among its constituent elements. In the end, such a preoccupation with aesthetic effect may well have been an even more powerful influence on construction than the defensive needs of the civic center.

In general, the builders of Section R erected their wall from two types of stone in particular: limestone and marble. Depending on its condition, the limestone ranges in color from a yellow-orange to a darker grey. On the other hand, the marble, now blackened from centuries of exposure, must have still been white when first set into place. Actually, in most cases the marble blocks were oriented so that a previously hidden contact surface faced outward, and the contrast between the fresh white face of the blocks and the darker hue of the limestone would have had an even more striking effect than it has today. Furthermore, it is clear that the mortar that was applied to the surface of the wall to fill the gaps between blocks and courses was finished flush with the face of these ashlars and did not obscure their vibrantly colored façades. Thus, the contrast in color between these two principal building materials must have had a striking effect on even the casual viewer in antiquity.

Today, the face of Section R is largely obscured by the olive trees planted at its base, but an illustration of the wall's complete elevation shows that masons built the fortification here in clearly defined horizontal bands of white marble and darker limestone. The lowest four courses of the wall are composed entirely of marble blocks, but above this, builders alternated single courses of marble with one to three courses of darker limestone. It is important to note that masons did not carry out the pattern with perfect precision across the entire face of Section R. Indeed, in most cases a solid band of one material is broken by the insertion of an incongruous block of the other. Elsewhere one can identify a complete switch in from limestone to marble or *vice versa*. All the same, given the variety of materials inserted into the wall, it hardly seems possible that such an easily identifiable pattern in the coursed masonry of Section R is a purely random phenomenon.

The same could be said about the shape of the materials used in construction. It has already been noted that the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth courses of the wall both feature an alternating sequence of round columns and square ashlars that has been described as a late antique imitation of a Doric order frieze course.[57] The pattern is unmistakable and can only have come as the result of a concerted effort to arrange the *spolia* in this order.

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57 Gregory 1982b, 18, 20; Wilkes and Waywell 1994, 423.

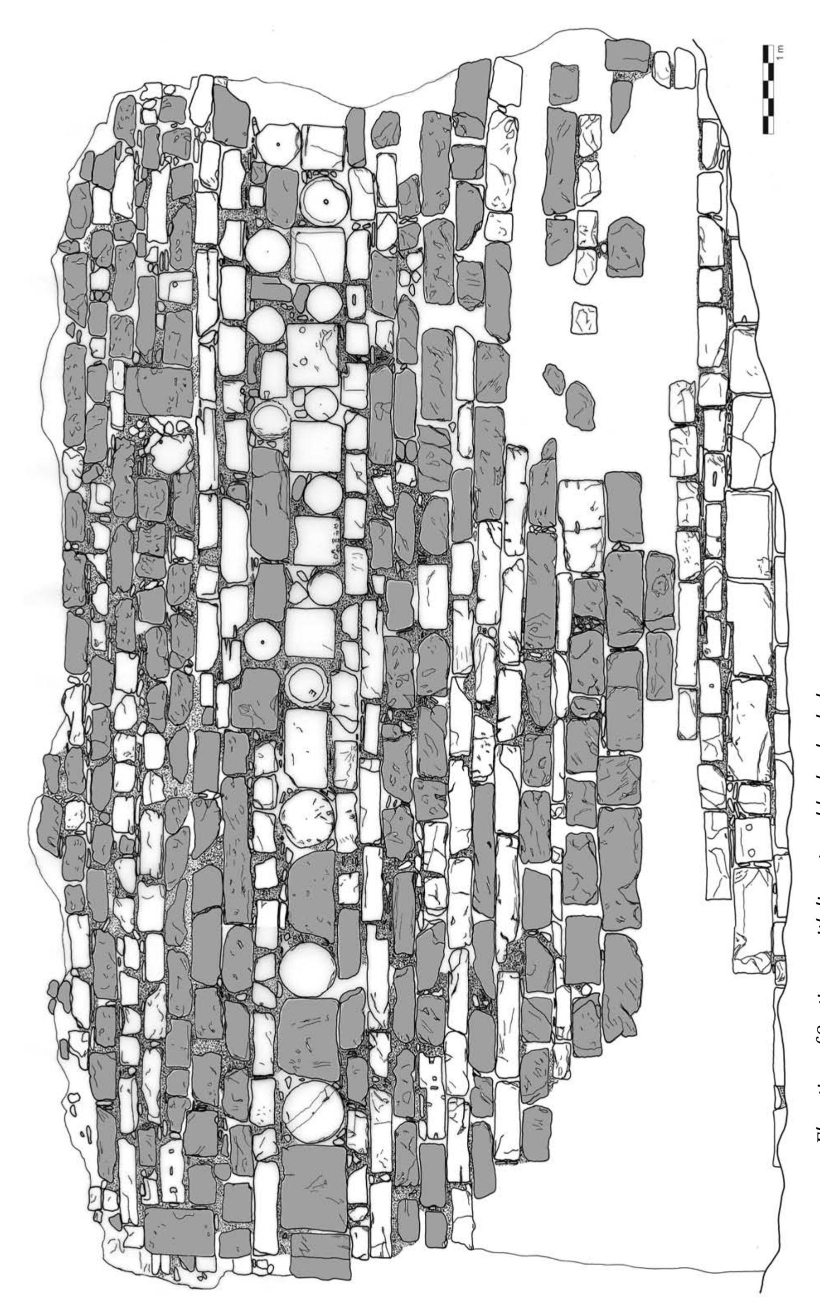


FIGURE 4.23 *Elevation of Section R with limestone blocks shaded*
DRAWING J. FREY

In fact, there is a distinct disincentive for builders to employ curvilinear features in a project dependent upon a steady supply of materials with roughly equivalent dimensions. For the gaps left by the rounded edges of the columns require that special care be taken to prepare a level surface for the next course of stones. Furthermore, the size of the materials employed in creating this design must have been an added burden on the builders as well. Typically, as the height of the wall grows and the task of lifting blocks into place becomes increasingly difficult, masons tend to select steadily smaller sized ashlars for use in construction. Yet the columnar courses contain some of the largest blocks used in the entire wall.

In spite of these difficulties, the masons chose at this very point to engage in what must have been the most challenging part of the project as a whole and the resulting appearance of the wall must be taken as a clear example of their preference for exploring the aesthetic potential of reuse over ease of construction. In fact, a preoccupation with the visual effect of the wall may well explain why certain strategic concerns were also ignored at other locations as well. For example, builders opted to leave the bucrania and garland decoration, as well as the stepped crepidoma in place at the base of the walls just west of the theater scene building.[58] In general protruding elements like this carved decoration would have been chiseled off the outer faces of the recycled blocks lest they offer any advantage to an attacker. Perhaps it is worth noting that these two areas in particular represent the southwest and southeast corners of the fortifications, both of which were equipped with gates in the initial stage of construction and both of which were tied together by an east-west roadway along the south side of the acropolis. Barring additional excavation in both areas, any potential conclusions must remain at the level of speculation, but it is quite possible that a concern with the visual effect of the walls on those passing or entering the defensive circuit may well be responsible for their present appearance. Whatever the explanation, it is quite clear that Section R is not simply a jumble of blocks hastily thrown together by representatives of a skilled trade in rapid decline.

Units of Construction?

One general exception that warrants further discussion concerns the fact that these alternating decorative patterns of color and shape seem to divide along

58 Dickins 1906–1907, 397–398 and Traquair 1905–1906, 422.

a vertical line running roughly down the center of the façade of Section R. In the courses throughout the elevation of the wall, it seems as if each time the left side of Section R features marble blocks, the right side has been built of limestone and vice versa. In addition, the blocks used to create the round and square shapes of the imitation Doric order frieze course also undergo an abrupt change in size and material composition midway across the wall's span. The massive columns on the southern side of Section R change over to examples with noticeably smaller diameters. In a similar fashion and at the same point, the builders stopped using large limestone ashlars and switch instead to smaller marble blocks. Furthermore, the right half of the wall features a second course of alternating round and square blocks atop the first, but this pattern stops abruptly at the wall's midpoint.

The unsteady supply of materials that must have been a constant factor in construction projects dependent upon the use of *spolia* offers the easiest and most simple explanation. To be sure, the masons setting the ashlars in place may have been able to select blocks from a supply of pre-measured materials laying nearby, but it hardly seems likely that the whole construction project could have been halted until a stone with the appropriate color could be located. The same could be said for the use of columns where it may well have been the case that elements of the desired length and diameter simply ceased to be available. This might explain why the second course of columns stops abruptly midway across the wall. The extremely broken condition of a single column in the upper northern part of the wall lends further support to the notion that complete columns in shapes useful for the continuation of a decorative pattern simply ran out long before the builders had expected. If it is, in fact, an issue of supply, then the process of selecting and using stones in the wall must have involved a never-ending negotiation between what was desired and what was available. However, such a conclusion only makes what the later Roman builders *were* able to achieve that much more impressive.

At the same time, the fact that these changes consistently occur at nearly the same point across the width of the entire section hints at a different cause. It has always been a far easier task to identify horizontal seams either in between courses of ashlars, bands of brickwork or, where visible, the cores of walls, where builders temporarily halted the erection of the inner and outer façades in order to build up the space between with rubble and mortar which required a certain amount of time to dry. On the other hand, it is somewhat more difficult to identify the vertical units of construction that were also a necessary element of the building process for fortifications. Given the fact that towers, which would typically serve as waypoints in erecting large civic defenses, were frequently spaced long distances apart, it seems reasonable to assume that

curtain walls in between would have been built in several smaller units. Just as with the Inscription Wall at Aegina, the discontinuity in the final appearance of the wall in here at Sparta may well represent one of those moments.

Conclusions

Again, as in the case of the Inscription Wall at Aegina, the material evidence of Section R of the fortifications at Sparta allows us to draw important conclusions regarding the overall organization of the building project and to attribute certain decisions and actions taken during the building process to individuals at either the higher levels of design or the lower levels of implementation. To begin with, because they must have been significant parts of the public ornament of the city, the wholesale incorporation of certain buildings into the span of the wall can only have occurred by authorization of agents of the Roman state on a civic, regional or even higher level. The excavated remains of the theater indicate that it was not so completely destroyed by either the earthquake or the Gothic raid of the late fourth century A.D. as to rule out the possibility of subsequent repair instead of conversion into part of the fortification. On the other hand, the fact that the enclosure wall was extended to include the Roman Stoa rather than utilize it as part of the defenses suggests that these decisions were not made haphazardly or only with an eye toward economy of use. In a similar fashion, those at the highest levels of project organization would also have been responsible for designating which structures could be demolished and quarried for building material. It is important to remember that no other defensive work had ever existed so close to the Spartan city center, and those building these fortifications were not heirs to a long tradition of renovation and repair so that decisions concerning which buildings would be of more use protecting the city and which would be more useful to preserve intact would not have been a foregone conclusion. In addition, the consistent siting of the defensive enclosure so as to take the greatest advantage of the local terrain required a degree of careful planning typical of individuals at the level of architect or master builder. At nearly every possible location, the wall was founded at the top of the slope that leads up the acropolis area, thus adding the height of the hill to that of the wall itself. Nowhere is this more evident than along the west side of the fortifications, where the theater and the hill into which it had been excavated offered a particularly difficult approach.

Alternatively, the need to supply building material of consistent shape and size was likely an issue addressed by individuals at a lower level in the project's organizational hierarchy. The variety of *spolia* found in Section R of the Spartan

defenses is truly impressive and it is reasonable to conclude that this building material was collected from a much wider area than in the immediate vicinity of the wall itself. Even more astounding though, is the fact that masons and builders were able to achieve such level and regular coursing in spite of the fact that they were working with materials quarried and shaped for a different purpose than the one at hand. Thus, it is quite likely that certain individuals were charged with the task of sorting the disparate building materials according to a pre-determined set of standard dimensions. Certainly, such labor-intensive work would have been carried out by unskilled workers, but the organization of this essential stage of the building process would have required the direction of a smaller number of higher ranking individuals, perhaps at the level of building contractor.

Yet, what is most interesting about Section R at Sparta is the degree to which the masons and builders explored the aesthetic possibilities of arranging *spolia* according to its shape and color. In the first case, the builders set into place differently colored building materials in an alternating pattern or horizontal bands in order to enliven the outer façade of the defenses. In the second, Section R shows an interest on the part of masons in creating a decorative pattern based on the shape of the blocks. At its simplest, the alternation of square and round shapes has created a pattern that draws the eye upward and separates this band of blocks from the rest of the wall. Yet, it is rather striking just how much this pattern seems to recall that of a Doric order frieze course.

Certain details make it all but certain that it is the lower level workers and not higher level project directors who were responsible for this exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of the *spolia*. For again here, as at Aegina, there is no evidence for a tightly controlled building plan as might be seen in an attempt to recreate the original appearance of any of the structures that were used for building material. Not a single example can be cited for a block that has been reused in a fashion that reflects its initial purpose. Columns and pedestals are turned on their sides with their bases and upper surfaces exposed. Blocks freely exhibit the anathyrosis that they were never meant to show. Also, as in the previous case study, there does not appear to be any attempt to intentionally deface, misuse, or otherwise hide these blocks that previously had been put to a different use. Even more to the point, while other sections of the walls at Sparta may not be well enough preserved to conclude with absolute certainty, the early reports concerning the appearance of the fortification suggest that such alternations of color and shape were not consistently explored everywhere throughout the defensive circuit. Thus, we may conclude that either the project managers intentionally restricted the exploration of this aesthetic to the eastern part of the fortification or the

appearance of Section R is the result of actions taken at some level below the overall plan for the fortification of Sparta. Perhaps it is the case that, as has also been suggested for the Inscription Wall at Aegina, here too we have two or more different work crews that are attempting to emulate or continue the work of the other with limited success.

If this interpretation is correct, then the realization of the new aesthetic potential of *spolia*—a creative leap that has been elsewhere attributed to the designers of the early Christian churches in Rome—actually should be credited to the lower level workers building the fortification wall at Sparta. For when faced with the challenge of creating a wall that would both defend the city and serve as a major part of its public image, masons and builders at Sparta recognized and acted on new and previously less emphasized aspects of the materials they were using. What is more fascinating is the fact that they then opted to utilize these newfound qualities in order to mimic and recreate one of the most recognizably "classical" motifs in the ancient Greek world. Thus, Section R may not have been intended to recall the classical past in its individual parts, but it certainly reinterprets its traditions as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

Reuse as Rejection: The Fortress at Isthmia

In the previous two chapters, studies of the process of erecting the fortification walls at Aegina and at Sparta have shown that the builders in these two locations took markedly different approaches to the use of *spolia*. In the case of the Inscription Wall at Aegina, the masons seem to have been motivated much more by an interest in re-establishing and renovating a barrier wall than exploring the aesthetic potential of the recognizable parts of the building they used as a quarry. Yet their apparent indifference to the appearance of the *spolia* is countered by their utilization of traditional building techniques to overcome the added difficulties involved in erecting a wall from recycled architecture. On the other hand, in addition to the greater care that they showed in selecting the most suitable pieces from a much wider variety of *spolia*, the builders at Sparta were also motivated to explore the visual effect that could be achieved through alternations in the shape and color of the reused blocks. At the same time though, their attention to these non-traditional traits in an effort to create a pattern reminiscent of a Doric style frieze course suggests a continued understanding of and esteem for architectural motifs of the classical period.

Perhaps then, it will come as no surprise that the late Roman Fortress at Isthmia, the object of our third case study, represents yet another unique approach to *spolia* in which builders consistently oriented or recarved blocks with molded or inscribed surfaces in a way that effectively "erased" any clear sign of prior use. As an example of reuse as a rejection of the classical past, this last case study further widens the spectrum of possible motivations for *spolia* use in late antiquity. Even more importantly, because the Fortress at Isthmia is preserved as a complete defensive circuit, it is possible to study of the use of recycled architecture along its entire length and not simply as isolated sections. As a result, where the previous two case studies could only hint at the existence of individual work crews, here at Isthmia it has been possible not only to identify the work of unique teams of masons and builders, but also to determine that each of these groups differed in the manner in which they utilized the same supply of recycled architecture. Such evidence for different approaches to reuse within an overall site-based plan for civic defense stands as a convincing argument not only for the utility of a process approach in the study of *spolia*, but also for the immense potential for the evidence of fortifications to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon of post-classical reuse.

 | DOI: 10.1163/9789004289673_006

The Sanctuary and Fortress at Isthmia

Located at the eastern end of the seven-kilometer wide isthmus connecting northern and southern Greece, the Sanctuary and later Fortress at Isthmia were positioned at the crossing of two major routes of travel in antiquity. For those entering into the Peloponnesos by land, the most popular route was the one that hugged the cliffs along the northern shore of the Saronic Gulf and passed through the center of the site on its way west in the direction of Corinth.[1] More remarkably, in certain circumstances, it was considered more advantageous to transport goods east and west over the isthmus by means of a paved roadway, known as the *diolkos*.[2] In general, this roadway followed the same course as the modern canal so that its eastern terminus was located just north of the Isthmian sanctuary. In short, nearly all traffic moving in every direction, by land or sea, passed through the isthmus, making it "a natural crossroads of the Greek world."[3]

As a result, Isthmia became not only an important cult center as early as the seventh century B.C. but also part of the cycle of panhellenic games in 582 B.C.[4] The excavated remains of the Temple of Poseidon, hero shrine, theater, and three different stadia attest to its prominence as an athletic sanctuary.[5] Perhaps even more importantly, beginning in the time of the Persian invasion, this site also came to be used as a meeting place for Greeks in moments of crisis or political change. "As the religious and political center of the Hellenic League in the Persian War, the Isthmian Sanctuary took on a new stature. It was the first and, in fact, only topographical symbol of Hellenic unity, of freedom for Greece."[6] Thus, Isthmia appears in the historical sources as the setting for several important meetings and pronouncements in the time of Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, Quinctius Flamininus, and the Emperor Nero.[7]

1 Wiseman 1978, 17; Gregory 1993, 8; Kardulias 2005, 31–33.

2 Gregory 1993, 146. N. Βερδελή (1956, 1958, 1960, 1962) excavated large sections of the *diolkos* between 1956 and 1962. D. Pettegrew (2011) has recently offered a much more critical look at the historical and archaeological evidence.

3 Broneer 1958b, 80.

4 Broneer (1971; 1973, 4) dated the first Temple of Poseidon to 700 B.C., but excavations in 1989–1990 yielded evidence of a slightly later date in the first half of the seventh century. See Gebhard and Hemans 1992.

5 Broneer 1971, 1973; Gebhard 1973; Gebhard and Hemans 1992; 1998; Gebhard, Hemans and Hayes 1998.

6 Wiseman 1966, 142.

7 Broneer 1958b, 85; Wiseman 1966, 15, 19.

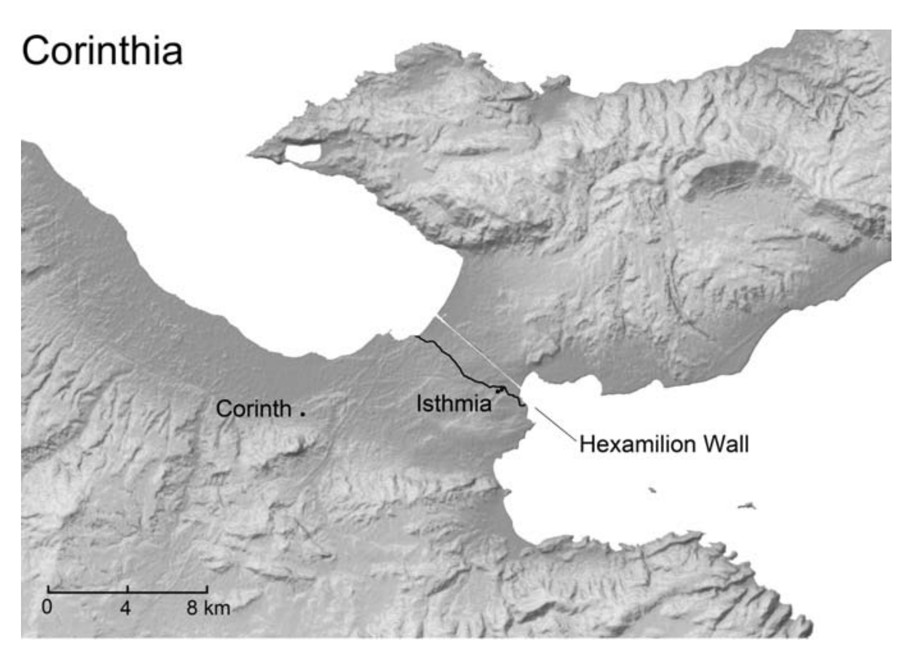


FIGURE 5.1 *Map of the Corinthia, modified from base map provided by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under creative commons license*
DRAWING J. FREY

Certainly, by the time of the imperial visit the decades of neglect associated with the destruction of nearby Corinth in 146 B.C. had been finally remedied and the Sanctuary of Poseidon restored to its former glory.[8] Thus, when Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, II.I.VII–II.II.I) visited Isthmia, the site again featured a number of impressive monuments. In addition to the theater and marble stadium, the second century A.D. traveler also mentions the statues of victors in the games, bronzes of Poseidon, Amphitrite, and the Sea, as well as a chryselephantine arrangement on an elaborately carved base dedicated by Herodes Atticus. An inscription discovered in the seventeenth century in the area of the later fortification suggests that Pausanias actually had been rather sparing in his account. For according to this epigraphic source, at roughly the same point in time, P. Licinius Priscus Iuventianus, a high priest known also from inscriptions in Corinth, built or repaired no less than eight different temples with their statues, as well as housing for athletes and a portico in the area of the stadium.[9] Excavations at the site since 1952 have uncovered still more

8 Broneer (1973, 4) has suggested that following the sack of Corinth, the actual site of the Isthmian games was transferred to Sikyon. See Gebhard and Dickie 2003.

9 For the discovery of the inscription and the associated evidence, see Wheler 1682, 438

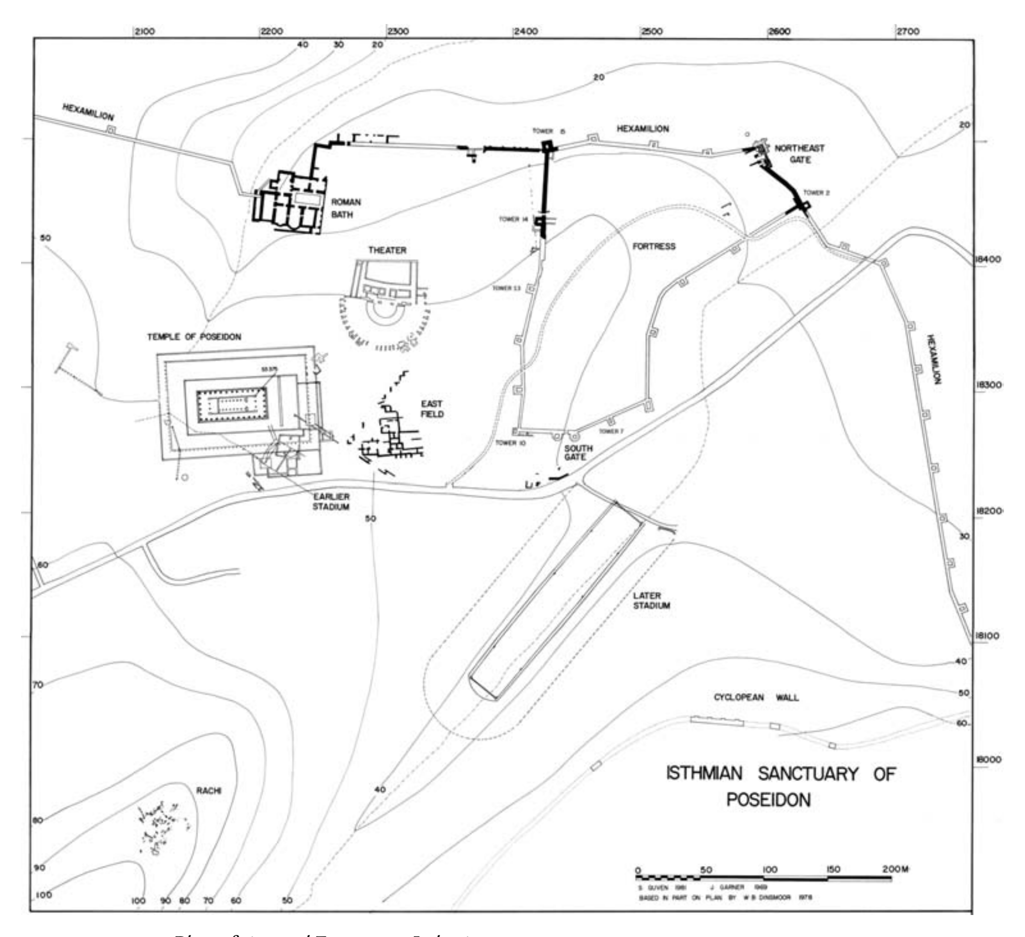


FIGURE 5.2 *Plan of site and Fortress at Isthmia*
COURTESY OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXCAVATIONS AT ISTHMIA

Roman-era structures that did not receive mention in either account. Most significantly, a large bath complex and possibly an associated gymnasium or stoa has been discovered to the north of the temple temenos.[10] Together, these monumental structures must have made quite an impression on visitors to the sanctuary at the close of the second century.

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and Broneer 1939, 181–190. The inscription itself is published as *IG* IV, 203. J.H. Kent (1966, 89) has assigned a date A.D. 165–170 to other inscriptions referring to this individual on the basis of letterforms. Brief mentions of this inscription appear in a number of early travelers' accounts of Isthmia as well.

10 O. Broneer (1955, 123–124) first discovered the bath in 1954, but it wasn't until the 1970s that the structure was fully excavated. See Clement 1977d, 145–147; Gregory 1993, 44–47 and Frey and Gregory (forthcoming).

There is little evidence, written or archaeological, for the state of affairs at Isthmia between this apparent high point and the end of athletic contests some time at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.[11] According to Broneer, "a sprinkling of coins, lamp fragments and pottery sherds from the fourth and fifth centuries testify to continued occupation of the site."[12] Yet, a hoard of bronze coins dating no later than A.D. 395, discovered in the excavation of the field east of the Temple of Poseidon suggests that whatever its condition, the site was likely affected by the devastating Visigoth raid led by Alaric in A.D. 396.[13]

It was almost certainly this incursion deep into the heart of the Roman Empire that demonstrated the need for a more effective protection for the southern Greek peninsula and fittingly enough, Isthmia again became the site of collective Greek action. The narrow passage through the isthmus that had always made this sanctuary a place of central importance also stood as potential point of defense for the whole of the Peloponnesos against invasion from the north. According to the historical sources, the construction of a barrier wall across the isthmus was frequently considered, and possibly even attempted at several moments in antiquity.[14] Yet, it was not until the beginning of the fifth century A.D. that later Roman builders successfully erected the trans-Isthmian wall that is today known as the Hexamilion.

Nearly three meters thick and 7,500 meters long, this enormous barrier does not follow the shortest route across the isthmus, but instead traces the ridge that lines its southern half in order to derive the greatest defensive advantage from the natural topography. The structure itself consists of a mortar and rubble core poured between parallel walls built of large ashlars, most of which were stripped from nearby buildings. It was anchored on its eastern and western ends by large bastions that overlooked the sea and was fitted with projecting towers along its north side at intervals that varied in response to the local terrain.[15]

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11 For the end of athletic competitions in the Greek world, see Remijsen 2014; 2015.

12 Broneer 1961, 254.

13 Clement 1977a, 136.

14 Many travelers and archaeologists have searched for these trans-Isthmian walls and have uncovered scattered traces of Hellenistic, Classical, and perhaps even Bronze Age defenses. Fimmen 1916, cols 2260–2261; Frazer 1965, 5–6; Broneer 1966, 1968; Wiseman 1978, 59–64. However, Gregory (1993, 4–6) has expressed doubts whether any of these earlier attempts at fortification were truly "trans-Isthmian."

15 Gregory 1993, 9–10, 27–29, 50–51.



FIGURE 5.3 *Cut through Hexamilion to the immediate east of the Fortress showing ashlar with mortar and rubble core construction*
PHOTO J. FREY

Because of its position and its ready supply of pre-existing building materials, the Sanctuary at Isthmia was a natural choice for the location of the fortress that housed the garrison that guarded the wall. As they had done all along the wall, here builders took advantage of both the natural topography and any existing structures in extending and buttressing this section of the Hexamilion. Most notably, a first century A.D. Roman arch was pressed into service as the main entrance into the fortress. To its east and west, at points strengthened by towers, masons built walls at right angles against the rear face of the Hexamilion. While the western side of the fortress runs in a straight line, the eastern side follows a long sweeping curve atop a ridge, then cuts back to the southwest, where it meets the short southern wall and entrance. With an area of close to 2.7 hectares, this fortress was of average size and contained a number of barracks buildings along the inside of the walls, a centrally located headquarters, and possibly a forge and assembly grounds at the northeast corner. Perhaps as many as 2000 men, that is eight *tagmata* or two legions, could have been stationed there at a time of crisis.[16]

16 Gregory and Kardulias 1990, 467–511; Gregory 1993, 130–131; Kardulias 2005. See also the brief reports of excavations carried out in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Monceaux 1884; 1885; Στάης 1906, 14–17 and Jenkins and Megaw 1931–1932, 79–83.

It would seem that maintaining such a large deployment of soldiers often proved either impractical or unnecessary. For the archaeological evidence recovered in excavations within the fortress and its towers suggests a history characterized by long periods of disuse and decay broken at irregular intervals by episodes of hurried repair. The presence of burials in strategically significant locations inside the wall—most tellingly at the foot of stairs to the fighting platform inside the main gate of the fortress—shows that already by the third quarter of the fifth century, the defenses were no longer fully maintained.[17] Yet a few decades later, many parts of the Hexamilion and fortress were reinforced, most likely as part of the historically documented program of empire-wide renovation that took place in the time of Emperor Justinian.[18] This probably marks the last time that the fortress functioned as originally planned, for some time in the sixth or seventh century A.D., its main gates were completely sealed off with thick walls of mortar and rubble.[19] While "no certain evidence exists for habitation at Isthmia" in the four or five centuries that followed, traces of rough walls and "Slavic" pottery suggest that squatters made use of this area well into the seventh and possibly even the eighth centuries A.D.[20] It is possible that the Hexamilion was again repaired in the tenth century and may have been occupied by Frankish crusaders in the thirteenth.[21] In A.D. 1415, the emperor Manuel II himself is said to have supervised the refortification of the isthmus.[22] Further repairs were made to the wall in A.D. 1443 in the time of the despot Constantine XI and again in A.D. 1462 under the Venetians, but by this point, the Hexamilion was no match for Ottoman artillery.[23] All the same, the reconditioning of this defensive work continued to be periodically suggested well into the nineteenth century.[24]

Recent Study of the Fortress

In the almost two centuries that followed its final surrender to Turkish invaders, the Hexamilion and its associated fortress changed from an object of mili-

17 Clement 1976; Gregory 1993, 77–79, 142.

18 Procopius, *Buildings*, IV.2.27–28. This evidence is confirmed by inscriptions found at the site of the Fortress. See Gregory 1993, 12–13, 80–83, 97, 101–102, 144–145.

19 Gregory 1993, 80–83, 94, 145.

20 Gregory 1993, 85–87.

21 Gregory 1993, 94, 145–146.

22 Gregory 1993, 14–19, 147–149.

23 Gregory 1993, 24, 150.

24 Gregory 1993, 1.

tary importance to one of antiquarian interest. As at other sites, W.M. Leake's detailed description of Isthmia, along with its mistaken interpretations, soon became the unquestioned authority on the extant remains of the sanctuary.[25] It is clear that his understanding of the site was affected by his inability to recognize the extensive use of *spolia* in the construction of the later fortress. For in spite of his assertion that the entire structure "appears clearly to have been a connected system of permanent fortification for the defense of the isthmus," Leake nevertheless mistakes the later fortress walls for the "peribolus of the temple of Neptune."[26] Remarkably, his suggestion concerning the location of the temple would continue to influence even excavators at the site.[27] This was certainly the case with P. Monceaux, who in 1884 became the first archaeologist to publish a report of his systematic excavation of the fortress. As a result of his investigation, Monceaux concluded that the entire structure was a Roman monument that had been appended to the trans-isthmian wall later in the third century. Yet, in spite of his inability to uncover any artifacts of suitable date, he also concluded that the enclosure occupied the same position as the earlier classical temenos.[28]

It was E. Fimmen who first voiced the opinion in 1916 that the fortress was "durchweg frühbyzantinisch," and even suggested that the classical sanctuary was somewhere more to the southwest.[29] Yet, it is R.J.H. Jenkins and H. Megaw who typically receive credit for demonstrating not only that the fortress could not be the Greek temple temenos, but also that its walls were built almost entirely of recycled monuments and materials.[30] Confirmation of their well-reasoned argument came two decades later, when in 1952, O. Broneer finally uncovered the foundations of the Temple of Poseidon in the area that these scholars had predicted. Having finally established the spatial and temporal relationship between the classical and post-classical monuments in the sanctuary, Broneer went on to explain that such a large quantity of temple material

25 Leake 1968, 3, 285–296.

26 Leake 1968, 286–287. For earlier accounts, see Spon 1678, 293; Chandler 1776, 274–275 and Wheler 1682, 437.

27 Leake 1968, 293; Curtius 1851–1852, 14; Burnouf 1856, 31–36; Bursian 1862, 20–22. Dodwell (1819, 183–184) and Beulé (1855, 462–470) also mention the site but add little new information.

28 Monceaux, 1884, 356. Additional work at Isthmia for the next half-century did little but confirm or simply repeat these conclusions. See Στάης 1906, 14–17; Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 59–71 and Frazer 1965, 9–16.

29 Fimmen, 1916, cols. 2256–2265.

30 Jenkins and Megaw 1931–1932, 82.

could be found in the fortress because "the column drums and other building blocks could readily have been rolled down [from the temple terrace] before they were built into the wall."[31]

While the initial phase of systematic excavation at Isthmia focused in large part on the temple and ancillary structures, Broneer maintained an interest in exploring the fortress. Near the end of the 1954 season, archaeologists exposed parts of the west wall of the enclosure, uncovering in the process a number of reworked pieces of the temple.[32] In 1956 and 1958, D. Pallas excavated the South Gate and its flanking towers as well as sections of the south wall of the fortress.[33] Study of the fortification continued in 1967 under the directorship of P. Clement, whose extensive excavations in the area of the main northern gate, western wall, and several towers helped to establish a more secure date for the defenses in the first decades of the fifth century.[34] In 1985–1986, archaeologists conducted a variety of geophysical and surface surveys in order to better understand the interior layout of the fortress.[35] Shortly afterward, T.E. Gregory published all available evidence concerning the Hexamilion and Fortress as a separate volume in the Isthmia series.[36] Finally, as recently as 2005, the Greek Archaeological Service has been excavating sections of the Hexamilion beneath the new national highway, near the area of the old highway previously studied by Pallas, and even at Isthmia itself, just to the east of the fortress.

Description of the Course of the Fortress Walls

The fortress itself is located at the eastern edge of a roughly rectangular shelf that is bounded on the south by a steep ridge known as the Rachi and on all other sides by deep ravines that drain to the north and east.[37] Because the

31 Broneer 1953, 184.

32 Broneer 1955, 124; 1958a, 20–21.

33 Broneer 1958a, 20–22; 1959, 320–321. This experience undoubtedly served him well when in 1961, as part of the construction of the Greek national highway, Pallas oversaw the excavations that preceded the removal of sections of the Hexamilion. His close study of the construction techniques used in building the defensive wall enabled him to establish not only different phases of construction, but also a preliminary typology of the decorative mortar work practiced by certain individuals or work crews in antiquity. See Pallas 1963, 78–83.

34 Clement 1969; 1970; 1972; 1974; 1976; 1977a; 1977b; 1977c; 1977d.

35 Kardulias 2005; Gregory and Kardulias 1990, 467–511; Kardulias 1995.

36 Gregory 1993, 3.

37 Wiseman 1978, 50; Kardulias 2005, 31–33; Gregory 1993, 9.

Hexamilion blocked many of these gullies, the resulting sedimentation to the south of the wall has significantly altered the surrounding landscape. All the same, it is clear that the high ground between the theater and later stadium, where natural depressions were once utilized for tiered seating, was clearly the best choice for the construction of the fortress.[38]

Technically speaking, the enclosure itself is not an entirely isolated defensive circuit, but has been appended to the southern side of the larger trans-isthmian barrier.[39] While the two separate elements exhibit a clear similarity in construction technique and use of materials, the fact that the east and west fortress walls merely butt up against the south face of the Hexamilion suggests that they were erected after the main defensive wall had been completed.[40]

From a point at its northwestern corner (Tower 15) the part of the Hexamilion that doubles as the wall of the fortress follows a ridge that runs along the south edge of a large ravine toward the east for a little over 160 meters and eventually arrives at the round tower (Tower 19) that forms one side of the main Northeast Gate. Because the pre-existing Roman arch is on a different orientation, the wall here meets up with its northernmost pier at almost a right angle. Very little remains today of the gate and flanking towers—the two preserved courses of the northern tower stand a little more than 2.5 m above the surface of the late antique roadway.[41] The now missing southern tower on the other side of the 3.2 m wide main entrance into the fortress marks the point at which the barrier wall again turns rather abruptly to the east in the direction of the easternmost corner of the enclosure.

Located some 40 meters southeast of the Northeast Gate, another square tower (Tower 2) marks the point at which the eastern fortress wall cuts back toward the southwest beginning its long concave curve toward the south. A modern road pierces this wall just south of this point of juncture, but has little effect on determining the course or construction of the fortress in this area. On its southeast side, the fortification follows the line of a ridge atop what was once a much deeper ravine for a distance of close to 220 meters. With the exception of a single excavated tower (Tower 5), the remains of this stretch of the wall are still covered in a deep layer of crumbled mortar and fallen blocks. Another tower (Tower 6), perched high atop the steeply sloping ground the southeast, marks the point where this gently curving section cuts back sharply to the southwest in the direction of the South Gate. Both this tower and the corre-

38 Broneer 1958b, 85–86; 1973, 1–2; Gregory 1993, 7–10.

39 Gregory 1993, 129.

40 Gregory 1993, 111.

41 Gregory 1993, 56.

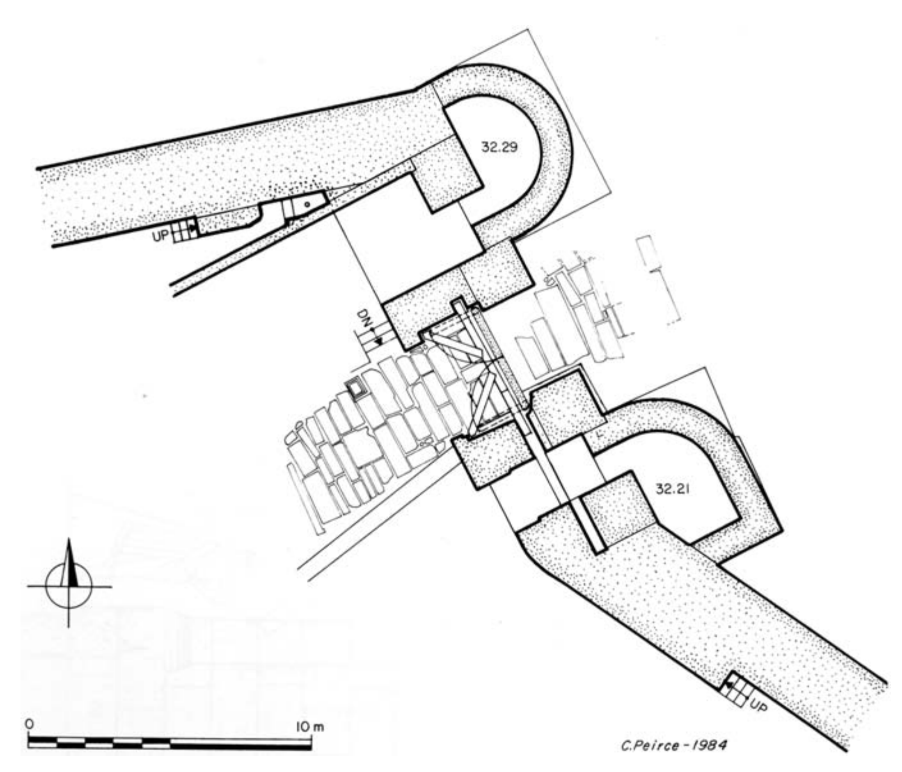


FIGURE 5.4 *Plan of Fortress Northeast Gate*
COURTESY T.E. GREGORY

sponding tower (Tower 10) located some 100 meters away at the west end of the southern fortress wall are unique in that they connect to the enclosure wall only at one corner and as such, are four-sided even at their lowest courses.

In contrast to the one square tower to their east (Tower 7), the two towers that flank the South Gate of the fortress are both externally octagonal (Tower 9 to the west of the gate is also polygonal on the inside while Tower 8 to the east has a rounded interior). Measuring the same 3.2 m in width, this southern entryway is entirely the work of later Roman builders, who possibly chose a polygonal shape for these towers in an effort to create a suitably decorative counterpart to the Northeast Gate. The towers themselves are preserved to a height of almost four meters above the late Roman roadway.[42]

42 Gregory 1993, 90, 93.

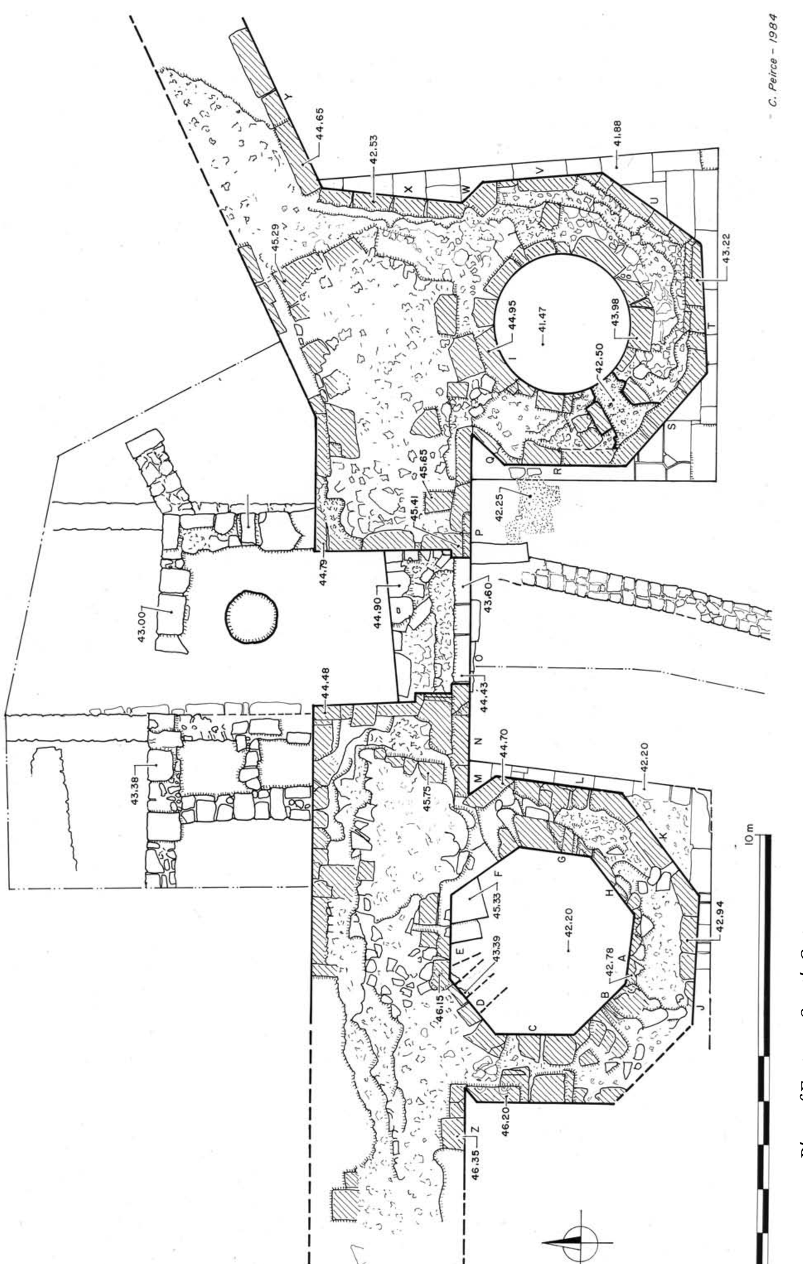


FIGURE 5.5 *Plan of Fortress South Gate*
COURTESY T.E. GREGORY

From its southwestern corner to the point where it meets up again with the Hexamilion, the western fortress wall generally runs in a straight line to the north for close to 230 meters. In many places the fortifications are preserved to a height of well over two meters. In the southern half of this stretch, the modern road that entered the fortress on the east has been cut through the curtain wall on a diagonal line between two towers. To the north of this break, many parts of the interior and exterior walls have been exposed in excavations over the past half-century. As a result, it is possible to see that many domestic structures were built up against the both sides of the fortress wall in later antiquity.

Throughout its circuit, the fortress wall is constructed of an inner and outer ashlar shell backed by a thick mortar and rubble core. Unlike the almost three meter thick Hexamilion, the fortress wall regularly measures only 2.3 m, but in some locations, increases to a thickness of more than 3.5 m.[43] It is clear that on the western side of the fortification, and to the west of its northeast corner, this widening is due to the presence of staircases leading up to the fighting platform. Yet, it is also possible that this apparent thickening may be due to the erection of buildings directly against the inner face of the wall.[44] In most places the enclosure walls have not been excavated down to the foundation level, yet due to the natural topography, far more of the eastern side remains visible today. Where the foundations have been exposed, it is possible to see that, where it was possible to do so, the builders erected their wall directly atop pre-existing structures. Finally, while there is some evidence that the builders of the fortress occasionally quarried stone for the task, a great deal of the construction material near to the Sanctuary of Poseidon is from *spolia*.

Tower 7 and Adjacent Wall: Traditional Techniques

It has already been noted that until quite recently, scholars maintained that the later Roman fortress at Isthmia was actually the temenos of the classical Temple of Poseidon. While they were certainly misled both by Leake's influential description of the site and by the large quantity of *spolia* they found in this location, it is also quite likely that the appearance of the wall itself played a

43 Gregory (1993, 135) has suggested that these measurements equate to 10 and 8 Roman feet, respectively.

44 Jenkins and Megaw 1931–1932, 74; Gregory 1993, 108–109.

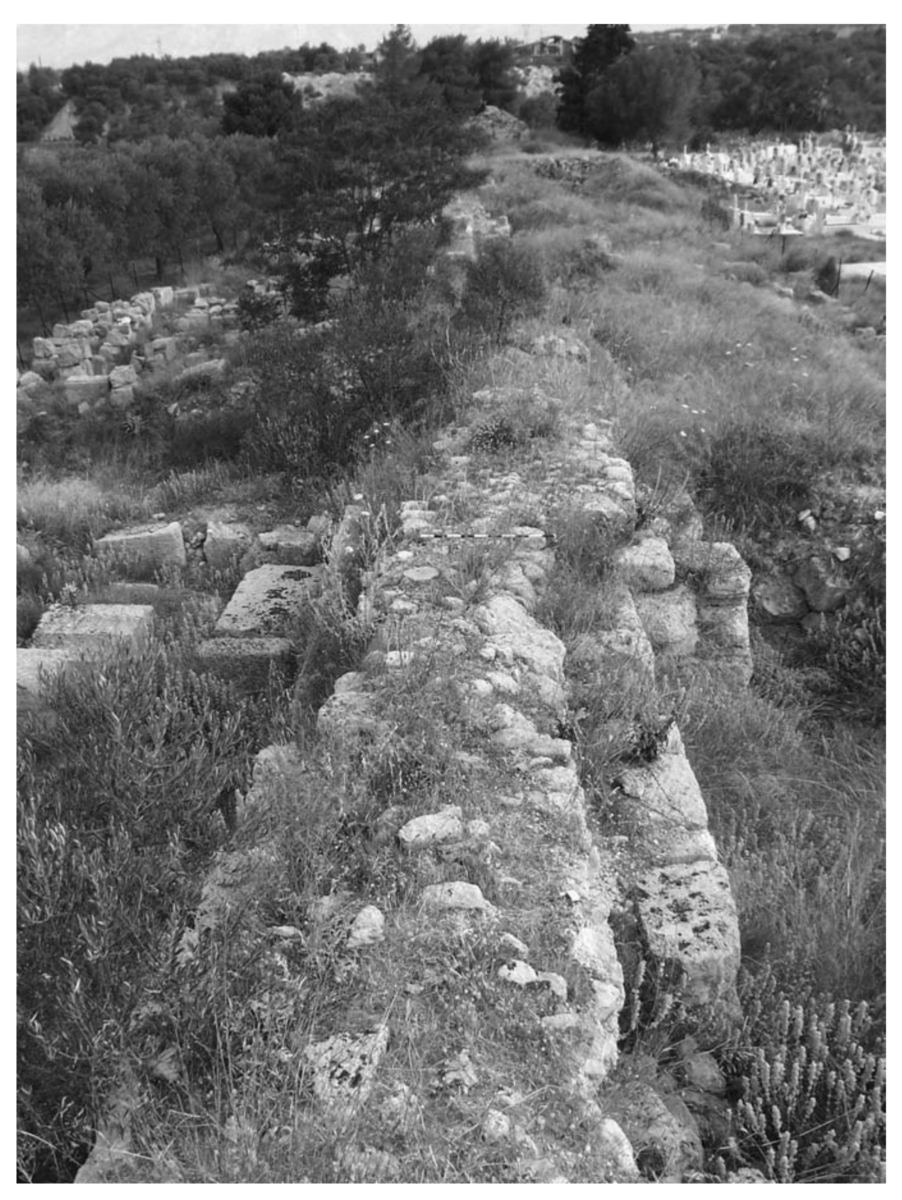


FIGURE 5.6 *West Fortress Wall south of Tower 14 from south*
PHOTO J. FREY

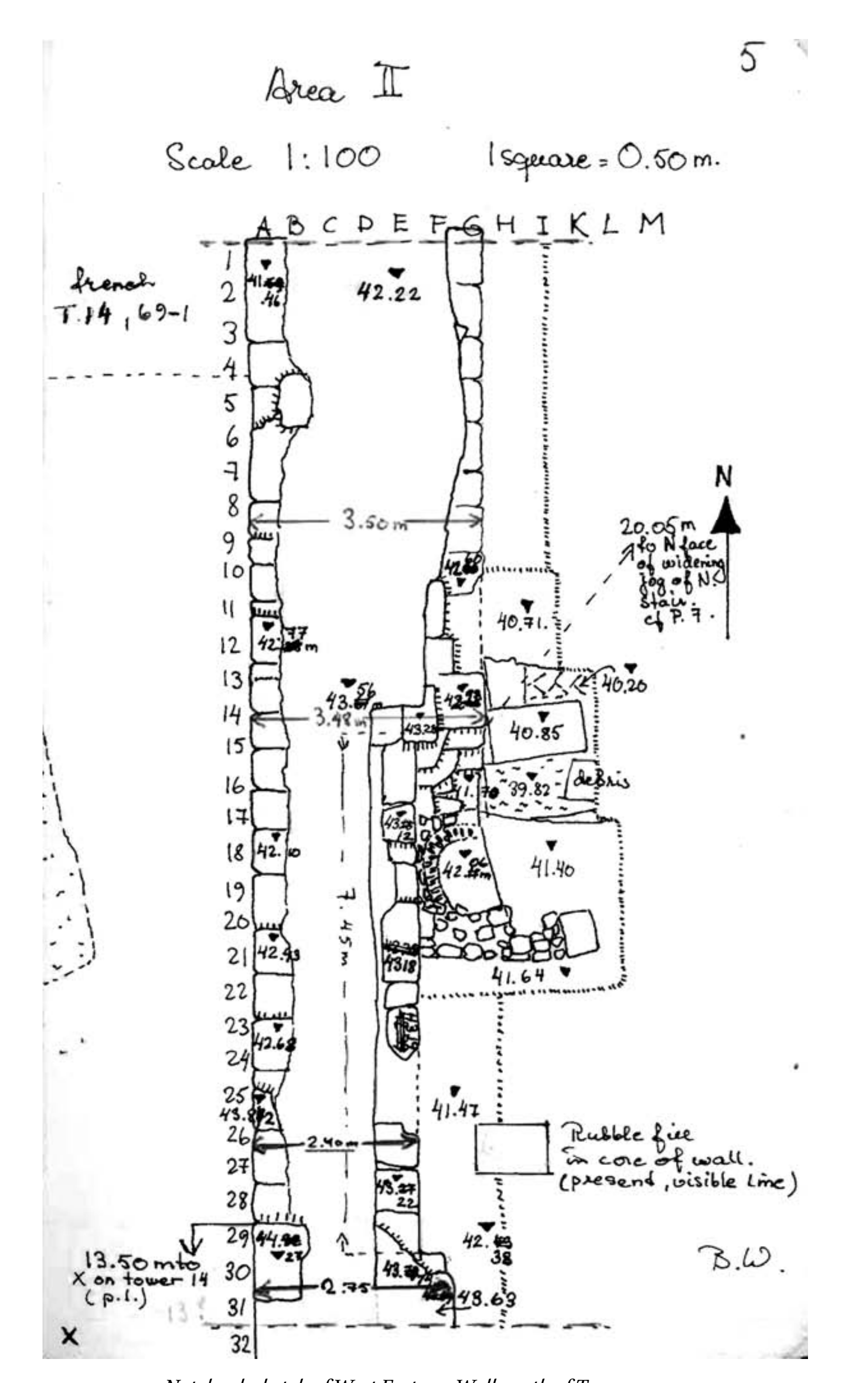


FIGURE 5.7 *Notebook sketch of West Fortress Wall south of Tower 14*
COURTESY OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXCAVATIONS AT ISTHMIA



FIGURE 5.8 *General view of South Fortress Wall near Tower 7 from southeast*
PHOTO J. FREY

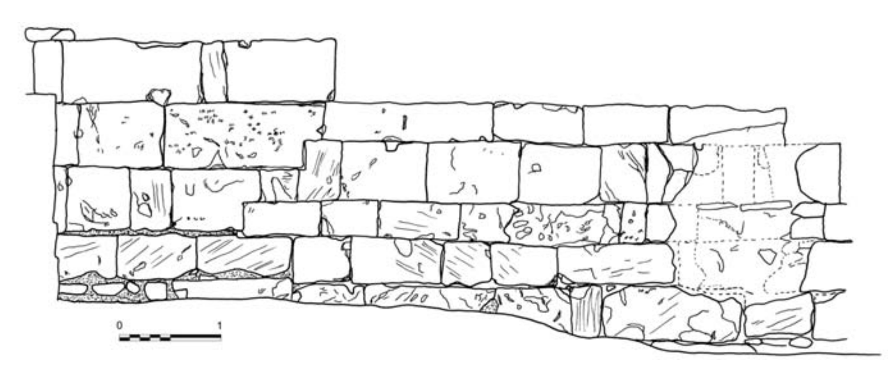


FIGURE 5.9 *Elevation of South Fortress Wall near Tower 7*
DRAWING J. FREY

role in their mistaken identification. On many occasions, visitors commented on the excellent construction technique exhibited in the defensive circuit.[45]

45 Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 54; Frazer 1965, 5; Leake 1968, 303. Monceaux (1884, 275, 279; 1885,



FIGURE 5.10 *General view of northeast face of Tower 7 from northeast*
PHOTO J. FREY

Even Broneer, who had finally produced clear evidence that the walled enclosure was not the classical sanctuary still described the construction as "uniform and of excellent quality."[46] Indeed, as a close examination of a few sections of the fortress will show, this description still rings true today. For in spite of the added difficulties involved in the use of *spolia*, late Roman masons and builders at Isthmia continued to erect ashlar walls that rivaled the work of their classical predecessors.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the case of Tower 7, located at the center of a section of wall running between the South Gate and the southeastern corner of the fortress. Near the end of the 1958 season, D. Pallas cleared the interior of this tower and the outer face of the wall to either side.[47] As a result,

212) occasionally acknowledged that certain sections of the wall appeared more roughly built than others, yet he explained these discrepancies as later repairs to what was at its core, a Roman or even earlier Greek structure. Curtius (1851–1852, 14) had expressed a similar opinion some three decades earlier.

46 Broneer 1953, 182; 1958b, 83.

47 Pallas 1956–1958, 78–110.

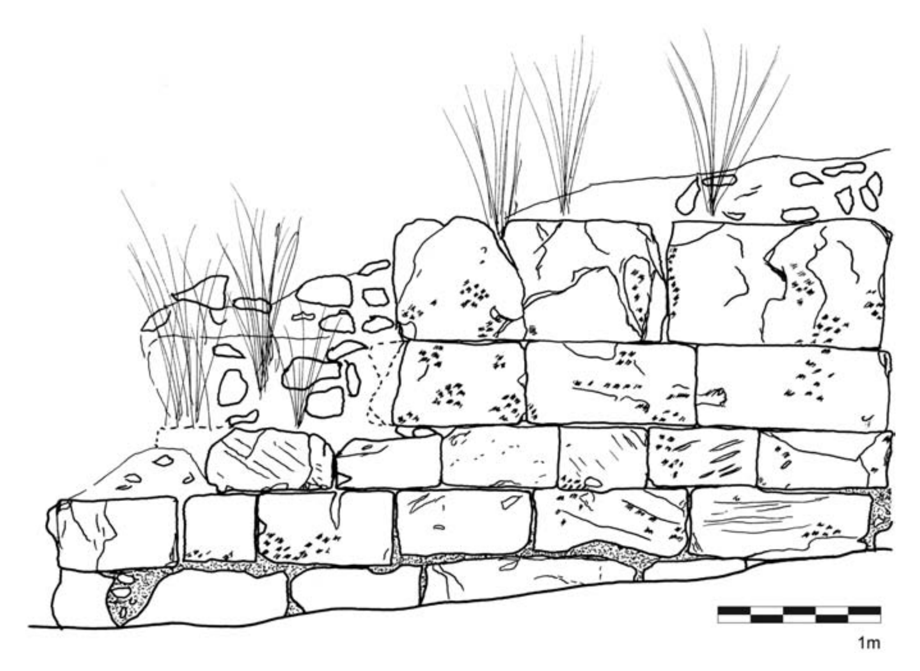


FIGURE 5.11 *Elevation of northeast face of Tower 7*
DRAWING J. FREY

the fifth century exterior of the fortress stands exposed along this stretch to a height of well over two meters and provides us an opportunity to study the original process of construction. The sections of the wall most intensely examined here include the five meter long northeastern face of Tower 7 and a seven meter long stretch of the exterior fortress wall to its northeast. Beyond this point, the original appearance of the façade has been altered by a large hole that gouges deeply into the core of the wall. The uppermost course of ashlars along the curtain wall here is only partly preserved so that in spite of the fact that the modern ground level slopes downward along its face toward the northeast, nowhere does the height of the outer façade exceed two and a half meters. Much of the eastern corner of Tower 7 has also fallen away and as a result, the tower façade studied here rises from a height of two courses at this corner to a height of four courses where it meets up with the curtain wall of the fortress. These sections of the fortification do not appear to have been affected by later construction and remain completely exposed to view. It is worth noting that while the southwestern side of the tower is bonded to the fortress wall, the ashlars on the exterior of the northeastern return of the tower wall simply butt up against the outer face of the enclosure. Within the tower on this side, the uppermost preserved ashlar is bonded to the fortress wall and it is likely that



FIGURE 5.12 *Detail of northeast interior corner of Tower 7 from southwest showing bonding on uppermost course*
PHOTO J. FREY

additional superimposed courses would have been more carefully joined to the walls of the fortress.

Even though the rear face of the curtain wall here only occasionally appears amidst the unexcavated debris, it is reasonable to assume that, just as elsewhere along the defensive circuit, this section is composed of inner and outer ashlar faces with a mortar and rubble core. In places where the outer ashlar face is now missing, it is easy to see the system of construction at work. Traces of horizontal seams visible in the core of the wall where the ashlar facing is missing show that, at least in this area, it was built one course at a time. After setting each layer of ashlars into place, builders dumped stones and broken architectural fragments in between the inner and outer faces and sealed this debris into place with mortar. Once this had hardened into a solid whole, masons then set the next course of stones in place and repeated the process. Everywhere in the area of Tower 7, the mortar is crumbly white and contains many small pebbles, crushed pottery, and sand.

While the excellent state of preservation of this section of the wall does not allow for a direct examination, it is reasonable to assume that the builders employed a system of headers and stretchers in order to bind the faces of the wall to the mortar and rubble core.[48] In the large hole just to the northeast of the section studied here, one can see that some blocks have been oriented so that they project rearward much more deeply than others. Likewise, in many locations, even though the outer façade of the wall has generally disappeared, it is possible to identify an ashlar that, because of its use as a header, is still anchored deeply into the core of the wall. Often, the negative impressions of the missing blocks to either side indicate that they were not as thick. Therefore, even though they did not follow a regular pattern, it is likely that builders employed a modified system of headers and stretchers.

Yet as much as the mortar and rubble core reveals about this particular building technique, it also greatly obscures other forms of evidence. Short of dismantling the wall piece by piece, it is nearly impossible to determine the full dimensions of any block still in situ. This in turn makes it difficult to establish whether this section of the wall was built with *spolia* from a single monument or from a wide variety of structures. However, if the lack of consistency among the different blocks that have fallen from the wall in this area can be

48 Some particularly clear examples of the header and stretcher technique at work in the fortress are the sections of wall between Towers 14 and 15 and southwest of Tower 2. In both locations, the stretcher courses have been robbed out or fallen away, leaving behind only the header blocks jutting out from, and still firmly encased in, the core of the wall.



FIGURE 5.13 *Detail of mortar-and-rubble core of South Fortress Wall showing horizontal lines (indicated by arrows) resulting from mortar being poured in discrete units*
PHOTO J. FREY

taken as any indication, it would seem that the material reused here came from several sources.

In addition, while it currently cannot be verified without further excavation, it is also likely that the lowest visible courses of blocks on both sections of the wall are the foundations. In each case, this course is 0.05–0.10 m wider than the face of the wall and its upper surface has been leveled off with a generous application of mortar. Both details are consistent with the evidence for the construction of foundations elsewhere at Isthmia. It is noteworthy that for the first meter and a half northeast of the tower wall, the foundations do not comprise a single ashlar, but rather a number of smaller stones set in a large quantity of mortar. At the same time though, their placement clearly reflects an effort to imitate the line of the upper edge of the adjacent block which, it should be noted, is overall roughly 0.15 m higher than the top level of the tower foundations. This slight incongruity created a gap between the lowest visible courses of the two sections, which builders filled with mortar.

At a point some three meters northeast of the Tower 7 wall, the foundations of the South Fortress Wall seem to disappear. The blocks running at the same level as the extant foundations no longer extend outward from the face of the



FIGURE 5.14 *Detail of hole in South Fortress Wall near Tower 7 from southeast (note also protruding header block in upper right)*
PHOTO J. FREY

wall, and there is noticeably less use of mortar. It is not until the wall reaches a distance of roughly six meters northeast of the face of Tower 7, that another, lower course of stones just begins to break the surface. This must again be the foundation course, for the use of both smaller stones and large quantities of mortar is again apparent. In addition, the section of curtain wall immediately above this shift in the foundations exhibits markedly less consistent coursing. Here there the transition from three to four level horizontal courses of ashlars is marked by the frequent use of blocks with notched corners. It is likely that these features came about as builders adapted to small changes in elevation along the course of the wall through the addition or subtraction of courses of ashlars. If this is the case, we should expect that somewhere just to the northeast of the break in consistent coursing the foundation course was stepped down to match the drop in terrain.[49] Furthermore, nearer to the wall of the tower, the terrain

49 It is worth noting too, that the location of this suggested "step" is the only location along the section of wall studied here where the vertical seam between blocks matches between two adjacent layers.



FIGURE 5.15 *Detail of protruding foundations on west side of South Fortress Wall from southeast*
PHOTO J. FREY

continued to climb, but not yet to the point that the difference amounted to the height of a single course. Instead, builders compensated for the difference by switching to smaller broken stones bedded in thick mortar.[50] The fact that this adjustment was so effectively addressed is a testament to the skill and ability of late Roman masons.

As the stepping of the foundations shows, masons here at Isthmia again understood that building in level horizontal courses was an effective way to address the problems inherent in working with *spolia*. Through the careful selection of blocks of equal height, builders could rest assured that the upper edge of each course would always be level so that they only had to concern themselves with staggering the vertical joints between ashlars. After all, thickness or width mattered only insofar as the blocks needed to project into the core of the wall to different depths as headers and stretchers. Thus if the wall

50 It may be that evidence of a similar approach has been revealed in the excavation of the East Fortress Wall just south of Tower 2. See Gregory 1993, 111–112 and pl. 38c.



FIGURE 5.16 *Detail of blocks in field to southeast of Fortress with roughly cut anathyrosis*
PHOTO J. FREY

was erected one course at a time as the traces of horizontal bands between units of mortar in the core suggest, the completion of each layer of stones would have resulted in a level working surface for laying the next. Given the difficulty of positioning these massive blocks, such prior planning would have prevented



FIGURE 5.17 *Detail of in situ blocks near Tower 7 from northwest and above showing a form of anathyrosis*
PHOTO J. FREY

the costly and laborious process of setting and resetting the ashlars until one achieved the proper fit.

Of course, none of these techniques represent unique solutions or innovations in the construction of fortifications from *spolia*. After all, the walls at Aegina and Sparta also featured a mortar and rubble core with an ashlar façade built through the somewhat inconsistent use of headers and stretchers and maintaining level courses. What is far more interesting, however, is the fact that this part of the Fortress at Isthmia shows that builders were uniquely concerned with creating a smooth, seamless façade that not only avoided the visible use of mortar, but also attempted to hide all identifiable elements of the recycled materials.

Even in their present weathered condition, the ashlars in this section form a nearly seamless façade. This seems to be the result of a couple of techniques in particular. First of all, a careful examination of the wall's upper surface in a number of locations suggests that later Roman builders had also come up with an ingenious solution for matching the vertical joints between ashlars. Rather

than match the entire contact surface between each ashlar or fill the gap with mortar, masons instead completely carved away the rear edges of each piece so that its front surface was slightly wider than its rear. When placed side by side, these blocks only came into contact with one another along the smallest possible margin, just along the outer face. The triangular space behind this deceptively clean joint could then be filled with the same mortar and rubble as was used in the core.

In a sense, this could be seen as an extreme form of anathyrosis, a centuries-old solution to the problem of matching the faces of large marble and limestone blocks. Yet where builders and architects in the past had concerned themselves with achieving a careful join on the inner, outer, and upper surfaces of blocks, late Roman masons simply attended to the exterior edge. In the end, this practice did not compromise the wall's structural integrity, and when seen from the front, the defenses looked just as solid and imposing as those from much earlier antiquity.

Second, while it is not as apparent on the curtain wall, the northeast side of Tower 7 retains numerous traces of work with a claw-tooth chisel. These marks do not seem to belong to these blocks' original phase of use. Rather in many places, the chisel work on two or more adjacent blocks is oriented in the same direction. In a few instances, the chisel marks pass without interruption across horizontal and vertical seams between ashlars. Thus it would seem that once all the stones had been set in place and the wall was nearing completion, masons gave the outer surface of this section a final smoothing. In many cases, this would have removed any last trace of prior carving that may have indicated the blocks' earlier location and function.

In the end, the masons' efforts in this area of the fortress were so effective that nearly every trace of these reused fragments' original form and purpose has been completely erased. Nowhere in this location do we find signs of fluting from column drums, carved decoration from epistyle blocks, drafted edges, or even inscriptions. Only three blocks in this area hint at the possibility of an earlier function. In the lowest (foundation) course of the South Fortress Wall, a single block has been placed on its side so that the eroded remains of swallowtail-clamp cuttings can be identified on either end of the piece. Yet this ashlar is likely part of the wall's foundations, so that the cuttings, which were filled with mortar, would likely never have been seen at the surface. Further to the northeast, the upper left-hand corner of another ashlar has been completely cut away and the angled face still preserves marks made by a claw-tooth chisel. Again though, a small stone inserted in the triangular hole created by this cutting as well as traces of mortar indicate that this gap would have been hidden in antiquity. In the last case, it is not even certain



FIGURE 5.18 *Detail of south wall of Fortress near Tower 7 showing chisel marks in same orientation on two adjacent blocks*
PHOTO J. FREY

that a thin vertical cutting (0.10 m tall, 0.02–.03 m wide and 0.03 m deep) on the surface of an ashlar of the uppermost preserved course near the center of the wall is actually evidence of prior use. For while it is tempting to suggest that in a different orientation, this narrow groove may have served as a pry hole, there are no traces of cuttings to receive the clamps that are typically found in conjunction with such features.

It is indeed interesting that the two ashlars that are most easily recognized as *spolia* have been placed at or perhaps even below the later Roman surface level. Coincidentally, these lowest levels of masonry are the only ones to show significant use of mortar and tile chinking and it is not too speculative to suggest that the original builders had never intended either of these features to be seen. At the very least, it is instructive to point out that in this particular section, the visible use of *spolia* and the visible use of mortar go hand in hand. Our inability to find traces of either in the uppermost preserved portion of the wall may suggest that here workers were observing an aesthetic principle that saw anything that broke the smooth outer face of the wall as a distraction.

In fact, one might conclude that the walls in this area were constructed with hardly any recycled materials at all. Yet, the ground above and below the extant



FIGURE 5.19 *Detail of blocks in field to southeast of Fortress with traces of mortar on decorated face and reworked cyma recta*
PHOTO J. FREY

remains of the defenses is strewn with a wide range of architectural remnants that have no other reason for being here than that they were once incorporated in the late Roman fortification. Here, it is possible to identify several fragments of fluted and unfluted columns and even parts of the entablature from the Temple of Poseidon that have been cut into a variety of shapes and sizes. Of these scattered blocks, three examples in particular hold special relevance in understanding the late Roman builders' approach to *spolia* at Isthmia. Two large limestone fragments with an identical *cyma recta* molding preserve significant traces of mortar on the ornamental surface so that both must have been built into the fortress wall in a way that hid their original decoration. Even more convincingly, on one of the blocks, the upper edge of the molding has been chiseled off to flatten the overall surface. The third block was roughly carved from a column drum of the Doric order, most likely from the Temple of Poseidon. Traces of mortar on a number of the sides, as well as claw-tooth chisel marks on one side in particular clearly show that what remained of the column's fluting had been turned away from the outer face of the wall. This evidence for "hidden" *spolia* points to two conclusions. First of all, it is likely that far more recycled architecture is contained in the walls and towers of the fortress than can be seen



FIGURE 5.20 *General view of south face of Tower 14 from south*
PHOTO J. FREY

on the outer surface. Secondly, late Roman masons working on this section of the fortress seem to have selected against visual references to the past history of the sanctuary. Rather, they were far more interested in building a powerful defensive circuit that only referred to the past insofar as it recalled the excellent stone working technique of a much earlier era.

Tower 14 and Adjacent Wall: A Different Approach

It may come as a surprise to anyone who examines the western side of the fortress that the early explorers consistently voiced such a positive evaluation of the quality of its construction. For in contrast to the cleanly drafted edges and smooth faces of the large ashlars of the Tower 7 section, this part of the enclosure seems remarkably rough. Yet, a closer inspection shows that, in building the walls here, masons depended on the same supply of materials and followed many of the same traditional techniques as their counterparts in order to build a strong, secure defense. Thus, instead of representing carelessness or haste in construction, the unique appearance of the walls on the west side

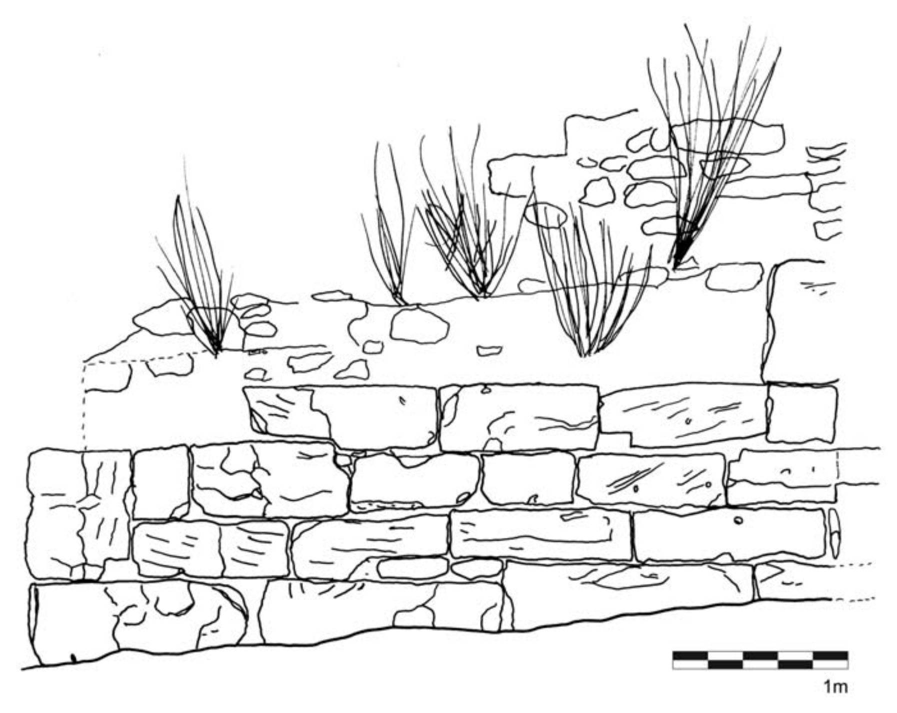


FIGURE 5.21 *Elevation of south face of Tower 14*
DRAWING J. FREY

should be taken as evidence not only of the inventiveness of builders in finding solutions to working with recycled materials but also of the way in which approaches to *spolia* could vary between groups working on the very same project.

Tower 14, the second area of investigation is located along the west wall of the fortress at a point roughly 55 meters south of the Hexamilion wall. Although parts of this tower had been explored as part of P. Monceaux's initial study of the site, the southern face of the tower and the wall to its south were first exposed in 1967 and 1969 under the direction of P. Clement. At that time, excavators also uncovered here a number of smaller rubble walls of late medieval date built up against the inner and outer faces of the fortifications. Yet these later features do not appear to have altered the structure or appearance of the later Roman enclosure.

The sections studied here include the 4.5 m long south side of Tower 14 and almost eight meters of the adjacent wall to its south. The ground level along the tower's south wall slopes down slightly from east to west and the upper edge of both the ashlars and the rubble core of the wall mirror this slight drop in elevation. At the highest preserved point near the West Fortress Wall, the five



FIGURE 5.22 *Northern section of West Fortress Wall south of Tower 14 from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

courses of the outer face of the tower stand to a height of nearly two meters. At the tower's southwest corner only two courses rise to a little more than a meter above the surface. The mortar and rubble core of this section is everywhere preserved above the level of the ashlar face.

The excavated section of the West Fortress Wall to the immediate south of Tower 14 is more consistently preserved. The surface here, as well as the upper edge of the curtain wall, is generally flat and level. Nowhere does the height of this span exceed two meters. Along the southern third of this section, the two uppermost courses are missing, while elsewhere, the outer façade consists of four or five courses of ashlars. The tower and fortress walls are bonded from the top to the bottom of their preserved height and are therefore of the same phase of construction. Later repairs, if they did once exist here, must have been located above the present remains and have since disappeared.

Excavations carried out along the interior of the fortress to the south of Tower 14, have shown that the original defenses in this area are composed of two similarly built ashlar walls fronting a mortar and rubble core.[51] The

51 Wilson 1969; Wohl 1969; Gregory 1993, 108–109.



FIGURE 5.23 *Southern section of West Fortress Wall south of Tower 14 from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

mortar used here is generally the same as that used near Tower 7, but contains slightly larger fragments of stone and crushed pottery. In addition, where it can be observed along the top of the wall, the core appears to contain a larger proportion of rubble to mortar than in the southeast of the fortress. On the other hand a general system of headers and stretchers was also employed here to securely bond the different elements of the wall together. While its excellent state of preservation largely obscures its inner workings, the breaches in the Tower 14 and fortress walls to the north as well as the upper surface of the ashlar facing to the south both provide ample evidence that this construction technique has been utilized throughout.[52]

Again, as in the case of the section around Tower 7, the wall's good state of preservation only occasionally allows measurements of all three dimensions of a block still in situ. Along the almost 13 meter long stretch of tower and curtain wall studied here, only five blocks could be fully measured, of which three

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52 In fact, this is the very area cited by Jenkins and Megaw (1931–1932, 71) as the clearest proof of the use of headers and stretchers in construction of the fortress overall.

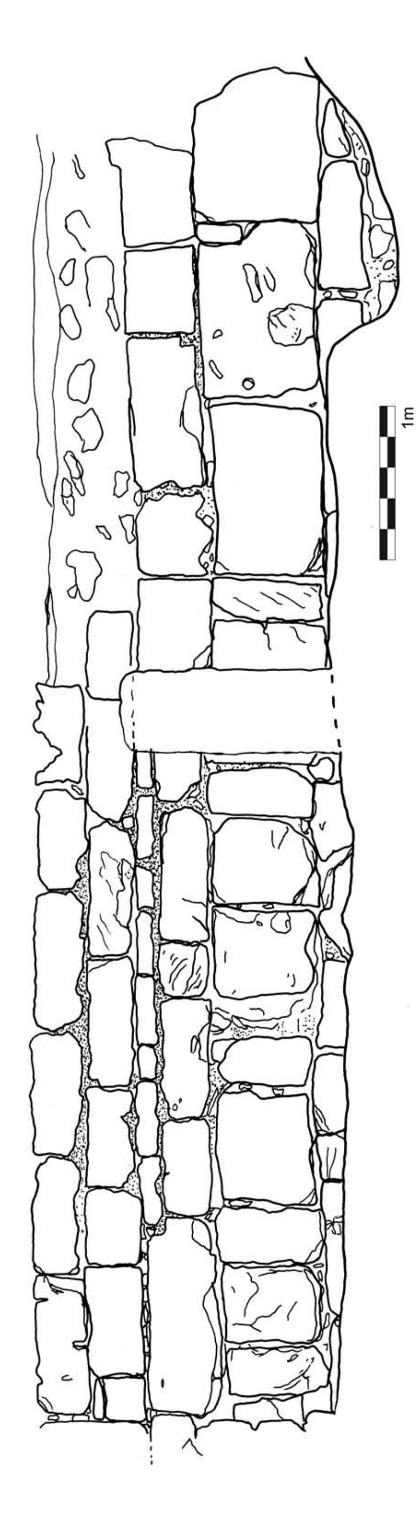


FIGURE 5.24 *Elevation of section of West Fortress Wall south of Tower 14*
DRAWING J. FREY

ashlars were of a size and shape similar to others in different locations and possibly even different orientations in the wall. However, given the wide variety of structures that could have provided the *spolia* for the fortress walls and towers, such conclusions based on incomplete evidence must remain at the level of speculation.

The sheer number of blocks that share at least one dimension, though, is more likely due to the fact that, again in this section of the fortress, builders erected their wall in level courses as a way to simplify the process of working with *spolia*. Yet the coursing is nowhere here as regular as that in the area of Tower 7. At several locations, one tall course of ashlars transitions into two smaller courses that together are of the same height. In addition, in spite of the fact that the tower and fortress walls are bonded, the level coursing from one section does not transition smoothly into the other. In one case, two courses on the fortress wall become a single course on the tower while at another point the joining of the two sections required the use of a notched ashlar. As might be expected then, the evidence for horizontal seams in the core is not as clear here and it may well be the case that the rubble and mortar were introduced between the ashlar faces of the wall at less regular intervals.

It is also noteworthy that, in general, the size of the ashlars here is smaller and nowhere are the edges of these blocks as cleanly finished as those in the Tower 7 area. Even if one allows for a great deal of weathering since the time of original construction, it is still hard to imagine how the ashlars of this part of the enclosure wall could have met along clean, straight seams. Rather there are a number of large gaps and crevices that have been filled with small stones and fragments of tile and pottery. Tiles and small stones have also been used to form a smooth bedding surface between the rows of superimposed ashlars.

Finally, a certain lack of uniformity can be seen at the foundation level as well. Along the tower, the lowest visible course of ashlars projects roughly 0.05–0.10 m from the face of the wall. As was the case with the Tower 7 section, here too builders laid the foundations on two different levels as a way to adapt their wall to the gently sloping terrain. Thus, the upper edge of the western two blocks is parallel to, but roughly 0.15 m lower than that of the eastern two. However, in order to bridge this point of transition, builders here adopted the much simpler approach of placing smaller stones atop the lower foundation block. Yet these stones do not reach to the end of the foundations so that builders eventually corrected the difference in the height of the courses through the use of a notched ashlar.[53] On the adjacent curtain wall though,

53 It is curious why this measure wasn't taken sooner, thus eliminating the need to use smaller stones.



FIGURE 5.25 *Detail of mortar on West Fortress Wall (note smooth finish between blocks in upper left corner of photo)*
PHOTO J. FREY

builders took an entirely different approach and formed the slightly projecting foundations from a number of somewhat smaller, roughly hewn blocks bedded in a large quantity of mortar.[54] It is possible that the more consistent level of the surface made it unnecessary to use ashlars, but other details suggest that builders here had adopted a different approach to the use of *spolia* than those who were responsible for the erection of the Tower 7 walls.

While it is certainly the case that these Tower 14 sections have also been erected using some traditional techniques, evidence for any use of anathyrosis or the smoothing of the façade through chiseling is completely lacking. There are also many examples to show that masons did not even pay attention to preventing the repetition of vertical seams between adjacent courses. Rather, it appears that builders here were far more ready to use certain techniques that may have simplified the task of erecting a defensive wall.

54 The present appearance of the West Fortress Wall where it has been excavated far more deeply near Tower 13 confirms that this rough rubble and mortar layer represents the foundations. For above the foundations there rests an ashlar course which bears a striking resemblance to the lowest full course of the section examined here.

One of the most interesting features of this section of the enclosure is that there is a correlation between the height of the wall and the size of blocks used in construction. Especially along the West Fortress Wall, each consecutive course is built of smaller stones. Although the same cannot be said for the entire south wall of Tower 14, it is worth pointing out that, in stark contrast to this section in general, the largest blocks of all consistently appear in the top two courses of both Tower 7 and its adjacent wall. The increasing difficulty of hoisting blocks to greater heights as the wall neared completion is most likely the reason for this expedient.

In addition, it would seem that the builders of this section relied much more heavily on the use of mortar to create a flat, smooth outer face like that exhibited by the walls around Tower 7. In a number of locations, this veneer of smoothed mortar is still in place and gives an indication of the overall appearance of this section of the wall in antiquity. The thin course of blocks that begins at a little more than a meter south of the Tower 14 wall serves as a particularly good example. Here, mortar not only fills the gaps left by the broken corners and the rough joins of adjacent ashlars but also adheres to the much of the outer surface of the blocks as well. On the façade, it has weathered to a light gray like the surrounding stone and at times it is difficult to distinguish the border between the two. In many other places, though, the mortar has melted or flaked away, revealing the original creamy pink color of the stone and the remaining mortar below. A quick inspection of other blocks along the wall shows that they too have this discoloration around their rough edges. The most likely conclusion is that significant quantities of mortar were used to even out and hide nearly all irregularities in the surface of Tower 14 and its adjacent wall. The resulting appearance of the façade here would have been almost monolithic, with the seams between blocks and any gaps rendered nearly invisible through the carefully applied mortar veneer.

Yet in spite of these different construction techniques and their noticeable effect on the appearance of the finished wall, the Tower 14 area of the fortress also reveals an interest in hiding the use of identifiable fragments of *spolia*. An intensive examination of the more than 13 meters of tower and curtain walls combined produced a total of two blocks that may be identified as *spolia* on the basis of their shape and decoration. Neither is clearly recognizable in its current location and orientation. First of all, traces of a smoothed face and perhaps some type of carved molding can be seen along the vertical joint surface between two blocks in the first course of the fortress wall located a little more than three meters south of the Tower 14 wall. However, the space between the two ashlars, which even today is not sufficient to examine this feature in

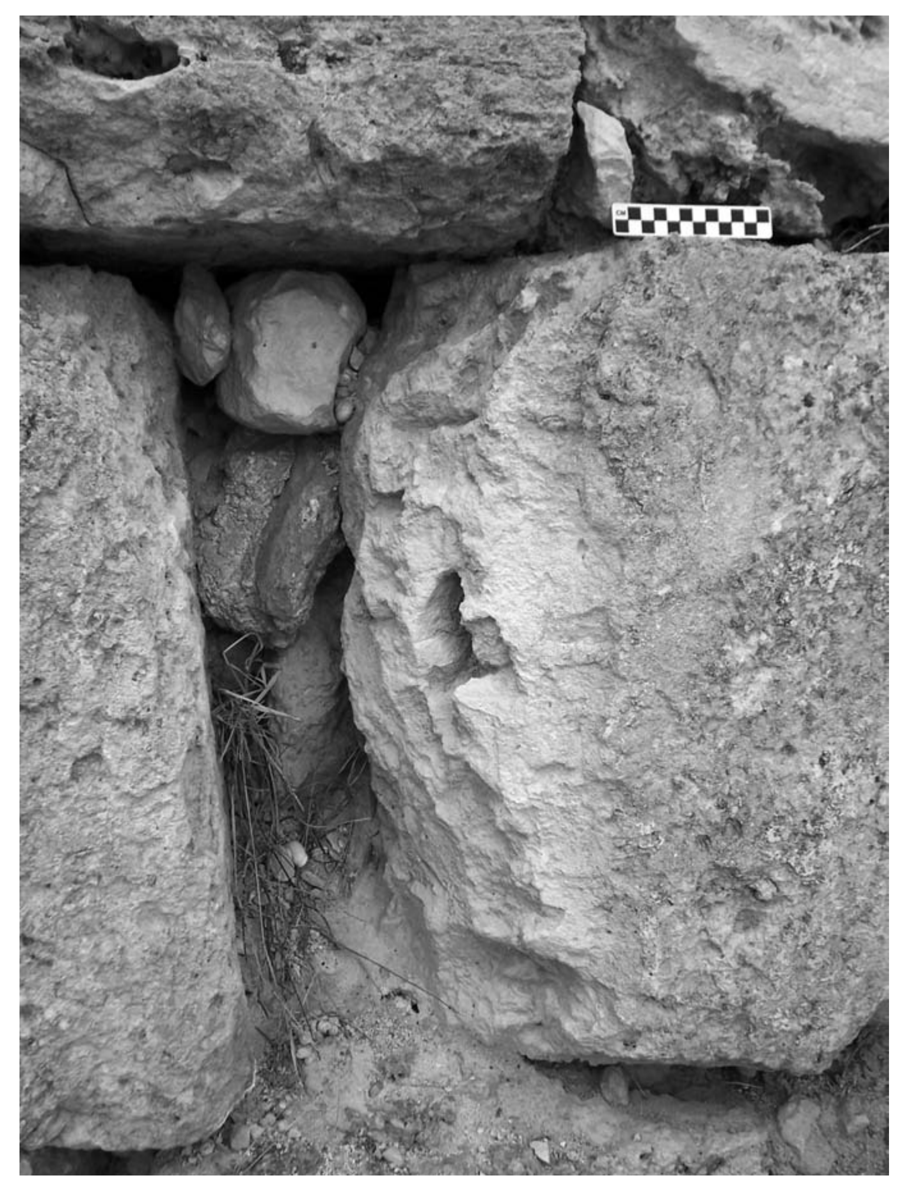


FIGURE 5.26 *Detail of gap between ashlars showing discoloration indicative of mortar filling*
PHOTO J. FREY

better detail, would almost certainly have been filled with mortar. Second, the lower edge of one block located in the uppermost preserved course just south of the later rubble wall resembles the profile of a Doric triglyph. The shape and size of the glyphs are a close match with trigylph blocks found near the



FIGURE 5.27 *Doric-order cornice in area of Tower 14 with traces of mortar on worked surface*
PHOTO J. FREY

foundations of the nearby Temple of Poseidon, but short of removing the block from the wall, there is no way to confirm this identification.[55]

Thus, as in the case of the walls near Tower 7, neither of these potentially identifiable pieces of *spolia* has been prominently displayed and one may justifiably wonder how many blocks in this area actually have been recycled. Yet once again, the presence of numerous fragments scattered about the immediate vicinity of the section studied here indicate that *spolia* was a significant source of building material. There are ashlars with drafted edges and a large number of column drums from the Temple of Poseidon broken into a wide range of shapes and sizes. Yet most telling are two blocks with traces of mortar on their decorative faces. One is a large ashlar with a roughly broken and chiseled molding running the width of one side. The other is a fragment of a geison from a Doric order building or monument of rather small dimensions. Judging from the evidence of the mortar, both pieces can only have been oriented in a way that hid their decorative features from sight.

55 Compare the triglyph fragments published in Broneer 1971, 133–135, figs. 114 and 120.

A Single Unified Project?

It is worth considering why there should be such a marked difference in both the process of construction and the final appearance of these two sections of the wall. It cannot be the case that these segments represent different building phases. As Gregory has demonstrated in his study of the Hexamilion, the frequent presence of bonded courses of masonry and the buttressing of critical points of juncture between wall segments together leave little doubt that we are dealing with a structure that was planned and erected as a single defensive work.[56] In addition, the general uniformity of each of the two wall segments also seems to rule out the possibility of later repairs.

Other commonly suggested explanations, such as relative visibility, access to materials, or structural considerations cannot account for these differences either. In the first case, it is actually the case that the Tower 7 section, with its finer masonry work would have been less visible than the walls around Tower 14. For while the west side of the fortress looks out over the level terrain of the sanctuary in the direction of the city of Corinth, the east side in its position atop a low ridge is much more difficult to approach. In the second case the near ubiquitous presence throughout the fortress of pieces of the massive column drums from the Temple of Poseidon seems to rule out the possibility that the supply of building materials played an important role here. Moreover, it is important to recall that some of the largest ashlars used in construction are on the side that is most distant from the buildings of the former sanctuary. In the last case, it is possible that structural concerns may have motivated the builders to employ a more traditional form of masonry on the east side of the fortress. Excavations carried out in the 1930s did show that the eastern part of the fortress had been leveled off with as much as four and a half meters of added fill.[57] At the same time though, such an explanation fails to account for the fact that a section of the western fortress wall to the immediate south of Tower 14 exhibits the same type of careful stonework as the Tower 7 section, with its mortarless joints employing the same unique type of anathyrosis.

In fact, a careful examination of all exposed parts of the fortress reveals the presence of a number of different building styles that are often located immediately adjacent to one another. The best example of this concerns the

56 For bonded masonry, Gregory 1993, 56, 98–99, 110–111. For buttressing, see Gregory 1993, 112.

57 Jenkins and Megaw 1931–1932, 79–83; Gregory 1993, 129–130.



FIGURE 5.28 *West Fortress Wall just north of Tower 13 from west*
PHOTO J. FREY

differences in construction of the two octagonal towers of the South Gate. Both towers have been erected atop a large, roughly rectangular platform and oriented so that a flat façade faces the approaching traveler. Both are built with inner and outer ashlar faces and a rubble and mortar core. Again too, the

material used in construction was for the most part recycled from the nearby sanctuary. Beyond this point though, these structures cease to resemble one another.

The most recognizable distinction between the two towers of the South Gate concerns their internal shape and style of construction; Tower 8 is round and Tower 9 is polygonal. In addition, throughout its preserved height, Tower 8 features consistently large, well-carved ashlars stacked in level horizontal courses with few traces of mortar. The joins between blocks are nearly seamless and the entire façade has been chiseled to a smooth finish. There are no signs of any provisions for flooring in the tower and, as such, it is most likely that any internal divisions as well as a means of descent and ascent were constructed from wood. The overall appearance of this inner façade then, is strikingly similar to that of the walls around Tower 7.

In comparison, the inner face of Tower 9 is much less carefully executed. The first two rows of large, roughly finished ashlars have been stacked in apparent imitation of base and orthostate courses. Above this point, though, the size of the blocks is noticeably smaller. Level courses are rarely maintained and large amounts of tile and small stones have been inserted to fill spaces between ashlars. Blocks at the corners of the inner face have been stacked so that individual stones carved to form an interior angle alternate with two stones meeting over that same angle. Traces of mortar still adhere to a number of blocks and the inner surface may have been finished with a generous application of this material. Finally, the remnants of stones jutting out from the inner face of the tower show that a staircase was built into the fabric of the wall. In general, the construction of this tower is much more similar to that of the Tower 14 section of the fortress.[58]

Given the fact that these two towers flank a gate that is only 3.2 m wide, we might expect a greater sense of symmetry. Yet, in spite of their nearly identical purpose, position, orientation, visibility, and access to material supplies, these two structures present a markedly different appearance. What is more, although most of the original structure is no longer in situ, it appears that the towers of the corresponding Northeast Gate also were also marked by certain asymmetries in construction and appearance. According to Gregory, at this northern gate, “the foundations of the North Tower are much more carefully constructed than those of the South Tower, which are characterized by

58 Pallas 1956–1958, 53. For comparison, see Gregory’s (1993, 95–97) discussion of the appearance of Tower 15, which may be the result of up to three different periods of construction and repair.



FIGURE 5.29 *Detail of interior of east tower of South Gate (Tower 8) from west*
PHOTO J. FREY



FIGURE 5.30 *Detail of interior of west tower of South Gate (Tower 9) from east*
PHOTO J. FREY

strikingly sloppy work."[59] Where the recycled blocks on the northern side have been carefully fitted together, those on the southern side have been roughly cut and set in place. Above this point, only the North Tower (Tower 19) retains parts of its original construction. A total of seven marble blocks, all taken from the same building, stand in two courses on the southeastern side of the platform and begin to trace the plan of a semicircular tower. Although in some places it has been shaved off to fit the dimensions of the platform, remains of an Ionic order base molding show that builders made an effort to retain the original order and arrangement of the recycled pieces. Traces of hook clamps in the original swallowtail-clamp cuttings suggest that blocks were even tied together in their recycled state. Yet, there is no trace of a second, internal tower wall or a mortar and rubble core.[60]

Although nothing of the South Tower (Tower 1) has survived to the present day, reports of earlier archaeologists suggest that its appearance may have differed from that of the North Tower in important ways. According to Monceaux's description, "L'une des ces tours est encore décorée de moulures; l'autre est d'aspect barbare."[61] A plan of the gate made in 1932, seems to confirm that the blocks on this side of the gate did not feature an Ionic molding like their northern counterpart.[62] Even more interestingly, a preserved section of the south wall of the South Tower as well as traces of mortar on the platform led Clement to conclude that, "only the northern half of the superstructure of the south tower was circular (corresponding to the superstructure of the northern tower)."[63] The southern half of the tower was rectilinear instead. Once again though, there is little difference in the purpose, setting, visibility or potential material supply to account for these variations.

Working in Teams

In light of the fact that the whole fortress and Hexamilion is the result of a single period of construction, such discrepancies between seemingly equal parts of the defenses might be attributed more convincingly to the activity of different teams working side by side on the same structure. For a project of this size and complexity would have required an enormous amount of manpower and the

59 Gregory 1993, 56.
60 Gregory 1993, 56–59.
61 Monceaux 1884, 272.
62 Jenkins and Megaw 1931–1932, 72. See also Gregory 1993, 58.
63 Clement 1969, 139.

division of builders into independent teams would have been the most efficient application of labor for the task at hand.[64] Indeed, the evidence of the fortress itself strongly supports this hypothesis.

Gregory has argued that the present appearance of the eastern (Tower 2) and western (Tower 15) points of contact between the fortress walls and Hexamilion should also be attributed to the efforts of multiple work crews. In both cases, walls meet at unusual angles, feature different construction styles juxtaposed with one another, and even exhibit signs of efforts to rectify mistakes in plan and alignment.[65] He also found this to be the most satisfying explanation for the wide variety of shapes and sizes among the towers that front the entire span of the Hexamilion, noting that, "if we divide 'long' towers (e.g., those whose projection is greater than their width) from 'wide' towers, there is a clear tendency for towers of the same type to group together along the course of the Hexamilion."[66]

In fact, the uniqueness of an individual team's style of construction may well have become a point of pride. In his excavations of the section of wall near the old National Highway, Pallas not only identified three different styles of wall construction based on the unique use of mortar, the insertion of tile and brick, and distinctive pointing techniques, but he also provided a detailed description of different types of graffiti carved in the wet mortar by individual workers or crews.[67] For in addition to a "characteristic … livening of [the wall's] faces through troweled decoration of single and double lines, triangle shapes and circles," Pallas found traces of slanted crosses, star-shaped designs, elliptical patterns possibly representing fish, and even circular impressions decorated with radiating lines in the shape of a sun.[68]

Gregory's study has shown that Pallas' discovery is not at all unique. He too reports the presences of crosses, ships, humans and animal shapes, and even brief calls for divine assistance, often located in the very same places where

64 Wiseman (1966, 50–51; 1978, 59) also comments on the enormous size of the labor force, yet stops short of attributing the differences in appearance among sections of earlier walls to separate work crews.

65 Gregory 1993, 99, 110–111.

66 Gregory 1993, 139.

67 In many ways, Pallas' (1963) identification of different techniques and phases of construction in this section of the Hexamilion, as well as his attempt to find parallels in building styles between the National Highway, the Isthmian fortress, and even the basilicas of Corinth and Sikyon, both mark an approach to the study of late Roman building which was very much ahead of its time.

68 Pallas 1963, 79–80.

it is likely that the work of different gangs came into direct contact.[69] One of the most interesting examples occurs at the northeastern corner of the fortress, near Tower 2. According to Gregory, here,

> … the best-preserved examples have three separate vs and resemble a crude version of a menorah. Is it possible that these graffiti represent mute testimony to a Jewish presence among the crews responsible for the construction of the fortifications, parallel to the crosses and fish scratched on the walls at other points?[70]

Unfortunately, too little is known about graffiti on the Hexamilion, or even the practice as part of the process of construction in general, to allow for any definitive conclusions. To be sure, other potential explanations—apotropaic devices, simple aesthetics, or even the absent-minded activities of idling workers—are just as valid. At the same time though, the fact that these designs have been carved into wet plaster or mortar ties them directly to the builders of the fortress and Hexamilion.[71] Furthermore, considering the fact that many of the graffiti are at points at which different sections of walls meet, it may well be the case that these marks were meant to identify sections of construction as the work of a particular team.

Out of this evidence a picture begins to emerge wherein a large number of generally autonomous work crews were given basic instructions and left to find solutions of their own to any problems that they encountered on a daily basis. Quite possibly, these teams followed overarching plans that dictated the starting and stopping points, course, thickness, and height of their assigned section. Indeed, any of the broader consistencies that have been observed among the various parts of the fortress and Hexamilion as a whole were probably the result of the general instructions issued to each crew.

This is not to suggest, however, that construction of the fortress was completely left to the whim of loosely organized teams of craftsmen. Rather, in addition to overseeing the progress of the project as a whole, higher level architects and planners more closely directed the construction of areas that were considered more important. For example, it is difficult to see how the Northeast Gate could have included the visible remains of a Roman Imperial arch, fitted with a unique pair of rounded towers, and entered by means of

69 Gregory 1993, 98, 100, 120.

70 Gregory 1993, 113.

71 Sanders (2004, 176–178) engages in a brief exploration of other examples of this type of graffiti in the Corinthia.

a more than nine meter long white marble roadway without a great deal of careful supervision at the highest levels. Even the selection of *spolia* from a single structure for use in the northern tower of the gate would have called for a certain amount of hands-on direction of the demolition of the sanctuary's monuments. Yet even here, and to a greater extent, in the area of the South Gate, certain aspects of construction must not have been considered significant enough to warrant careful attention. Thus, the foundations of the Northeast Gate and the interiors of the South Gate towers feature discrepancies noticeable to the modern archaeologist, but probably invisible to the ancient viewer.

Conclusions

As has been the case for the other monuments examined in the two previous chapters, the fortress at Isthmia exhibits its own unique mix of tradition and innovation in the use of *spolia*. At the most basic level, it is important to point out that, yet again, the evidence here suggests that late Roman builders continued to follow the traditional techniques of their craft. The walls at Isthmia have been carefully and expertly raised in a manner that recalls civic defenses dating back to the Hellenistic period and before. Furthermore, in its attention to local topography, its utilization of pre-existing structures, and its careful use of sorted architectural fragments, this defensive work again shows little sign of being a desperate measure taken in the face of an imminent barbarian onslaught. Rather, the amount of planning and preparation that must have gone into a project of this size and scale should be taken as evidence of the continued ability both of the Roman Empire to undertake ambitious architectural projects and of the architects and builders to see such plans through to completion in a way that recalled the best classical tradition.

All the same, unlike the defensive works at other sites, and perhaps due to the fact that a project of this scale can only have been an imperially sponsored project, there seems to have been a general prohibition against the display of *spolia* in such a way that revealed the earlier use of the block or stone. In the nearly sixty square meters of wall examined in the areas of Towers 7 and 14, no more than five blocks could be positively identified in situ as *spolia*. In the majority of these cases, the recycled materials may well have been below the surface level or covered with mortar. Such a remarkably small proportion indicates that this is not just a situation where *spolia* was simply thought of as building stone. Rather these blocks were actively hidden except in cases where an entire monument was recycled for a specific purpose.

The fact that so much of the Fortress at Isthmia has been preserved also distinguishes it from the defenses at other locations in an important way. For it makes possible a comparison of different sections of wall which in turn shows that aside from a few general instructions, individual masons and work crews were given a great deal of autonomy to erect and finish the wall as they saw fit. This would seem the most likely explanation for the different appearance of the parts of the enclosure examined here. In terms of choice of material, the Tower 7 side exhibits a preference for larger blocks than the Tower 14 side. In terms of manner of construction, the Tower 14 section shows a far greater reliance on mortar and inserted tiles than is seen in the neatly carved edges of the Tower 7 area. In terms of final finish, the Tower 7 area depended on a cleanly chiseled façade while Tower 14 involved the use of mortar to smooth the wall's outer face. All of these distinctions point to the conclusion that at the Fortress at Isthmia the manner of *spolia* use was largely a matter of each team's level of experience, local building traditions, and even aesthetic sense.

In the end, the evidence for heterogeneous approaches to the use of *spolia* at Isthmia stands as a strong confirmation of the conclusions reached in the previous two case studies concerning the agency of lower level workers in devising creative solutions to the use of recycled building materials. As a result, it is important to point out that when we speak of aesthetics or the intentional use or misuse of *spolia*, we need to begin to be more precise concerning the issue of agency. It should be the case that only after we have carefully recorded the details of each monument's construction, as has been demonstrated here, can we speak of principles of *spolia* use. Nor can we rest assured that whatever "rules" we have uncovered apply beyond the specific region, or even site, that has been the object of our careful study. As with any other building technique or architectural genre in classical antiquity, it is the regional variations as much as the commonalities that should warrant our careful attention.

CHAPTER 6

Spoliation as Process, Military Strategy, and Democratization

In the end, these three case studies clearly show the wide diversity of potential approaches to the use of *spolia* in late antiquity, not simply within the limited category of defensive walls, but by extension, among all structures erected by later Roman architects and builders as a whole. For in each of the examples presented above, a careful and intensive examination of the extant evidence has revealed subtle, yet unmistakable signs of both the locally determined plan of each project and at times, even the minute day to day decisions and adaptations that the process of construction inevitably entails. Together, these often overlooked details suggest that, at least in the century that followed the widespread turn to pre-existing architecture as a building material, *spolia* use did not follow a clear set of rules and guidelines analogous to the classical orders of earlier antiquity. Rather, the use of *spolia* in such great quantities was a development that required a markedly different approach to building and at this early stage in the process, it was not entirely clear what that approach should be. In many ways, the slate had been wiped clean and late antique builders faced the exciting and daunting task of developing an entirely new set of practices and procedures for dealing with stones cut for a different project altogether. The ways in which they met this challenge with a mix of traditional techniques and creative innovations stands as clear testimony to the continued strength and vitality of an era too often associated with decline.

In this context, because they are heir to building techniques extending well into pre-historic times, fortification walls built from *spolia* serve as a particularly good example of the ways in which each project is characterized by a unique mix of tradition and innovation. Thus, it is worthwhile to summarize the evidence of these walls before discussing the relevance of their study to that of *spolia* use in late antiquity in general. A quick look at the similarities among these three monuments is followed by a discussion of the walls' important differences in terms of their use of materials and construction techniques. These regional and site-specific distinctions serve as an important corrective to the tendency to develop Mediterranean-wide typologies of *spolia* use in late antiquity. Even more importantly though, a consideration of these defenses as architectural works on par with all other secular and religious monuments

 | DOI: 10.1163/9789004289673_007

of the later Roman period stands as an important demonstration that the selection of structures for consideration in studies of *spolia* plays an essential role in our understanding of this interesting phenomenon. For if we accept the argument that the built environment not only reflects, but also shapes the society responsible for its creation, then it must be the case that the appearance of these civic and regional defenses was as significant, if not more so, than the churches and arches that are more commonly the subject of *spolia* studies.

Similarities

To begin, it is important to point out that the walls examined in these three case studies all have a number of defensive features in common. It is these shared characteristics that help to demonstrate that the late Roman fortifications at Aegina, Sparta, and Isthmia are not only part of a general response to the increasing threat of invasion in the first decades of the fifth century A.D., but also that this response was carried out in a calculated fashion that followed long-standing traditions in defensive architecture. Most importantly though, the characteristics that these three walls share in common form an important background against which to analyze the far more significant differences in construction techniques utilizing *spolia*.

First and foremost, the defenses in each example have been carefully located so as to extract the greatest advantage from the surrounding environment. This is certainly most evident in terms of the local terrain. At Isthmia and Sparta, where a defensive circuit was an entirely new creation, planners and architects were careful to position the walls at the top of any nearby incline in order to increase the height of the fortification through the natural topography. In addition, even though a relatively small section of the defensive works at Aegina are extant today, it is clear that this stretch of wall followed the northern edge of the rocky promontory overlooking the north harbor, effectively increasing its height through natural means as well. More significantly though, the placement of the defenses at Aegina directly atop pre-existing structures represents another striking similarity among the three case studies. In each example above, for those who planned the course of these walls, the built environment had become as much a strategic consideration as the natural, and in many ways it was an entirely logical step to move from one to the other. For unlike the classical and earlier periods where civic defenses were enormous circuits stretching many kilometers well outside the more densely populated urban core, the much more constricted and easily manned defenses of the later Roman era most often passed through the immediate center of a settlement.

Moreover, these urban areas can only have grown more dense and compact over the centuries and would have accumulated a quantity of buildings and monuments that must have been almost bewildering. Thus, one could easily imagine how the shell of a building lost to attack, earthquake, or simply civic indifference would have borne a striking similarity to a steep bedrock outcrop in the eyes of one charged with fortifying a settlement or region.

Secondly, in terms of construction technique, in all three case studies architects and builders erected the same type of wall featuring an outer façade composed of ashlar blocks fronting an even thicker core of rubble and mortar. Where it was possible to determine, it appears that each project began with the creation of a foundation of mortar and stone that was slightly wider than the wall above. Atop this, masons began to build up the outer face of the wall in level courses, taking care to arrange ashlars in alternating sequences of headers and stretchers in order to ensure a secure bond with the inner core of the wall. At regular intervals, when the outer shell reached a sufficient height, broken blocks, stones, and a whole assortment of material were dumped in behind it and sealed in place with a large quantity of mortar. Traces of these horizontal layers are especially visible in the exposed core of the fortress walls at Isthmia.

In general, aside from the use of large quantities of mortar and recycled blocks, these construction techniques differed little from those used to erect walls in the Hellenistic era.[1] Yet in some ways, the decision to utilize *spolia* in construction had actually made the process somewhat more complex. For instead of being able to depend on a steady supply of newly quarried stones of prescribed dimensions, masons in late antiquity were faced with the added difficulty of having to make use of blocks of many different shapes and sizes from a wide variety of sources. In all three examples above, this additional complication was addressed through the careful sorting and selection of blocks before construction. While it is true that, at times, smaller stones, bricks, tiles, and mortar were also inserted into gaps in order to create a level bedding surface for each subsequent course of masonry, we should not allow such non-classical features to distract us from the ways in which builders managed to maintain a number of other traditional building techniques. In this way, the present study of fortifications should encourage an effort to focus as much on the ways in which spoliation encouraged the maintenance of classical traditions as on the ways in which it allowed for experimentation and change.

1 Tomlinson 1961; Foss and Winfield 1986, 25–27; Adam 1994, 76–77; McNicoll and Milner 1997, 222.

Finally, although it is not directly related to the study of the practice of reuse, it is nevertheless worth noting that each of these three fortifications has also suffered far more damage and destruction in the last two centuries than in all the years beforehand combined. Considering the fact that, more often than not, and in true Vasarian fashion, scorn has been heaped upon the builders of the later Roman period for their assumed role in uprooting and destroying all signs of an earlier, greater era, the role of more recent human intervention deserves far more scrutiny. The destruction of ancient monuments may have its origins firmly rooted in earlier antiquity, but that the process has experienced a marked acceleration in recent years.

Differences

It is against this background of the shared characteristics that the differences in the final appearance of the walls at these three sites should be viewed. For in spite these similarities, each fortification wall exhibits a unique approach to the use of recycled materials. And while these critical differences potentially stem from a number of causes, they nevertheless suggest that studies of *spolia* use in the future must pay much more attention to regional variations in their final analyses.

To begin with, even though all three fortifications incorporated pre-existing structures in their defensive circuit, each approached these earlier monuments somewhat differently. At Aegina, builders and masons opted to repair parts of the Archaic-era walls rather than simply replace them altogether. This activity appears to have been particularly difficult and time consuming and cannot simply be explained as a practical expedient. This suggests that the later Roman builders might have thought of their project as a renovation rather than an entirely new creation. Or it is possible that this "repair" reflects an interest in displaying the ancient precedent for the later fortification. On the other hand, the same cannot be claimed in the case of Sparta and Isthmia. For at both sites, walls were erected in locations that had never before needed a protective barrier and the monuments incorporated in each underwent a clear change from their original function. Here, the benefits in terms of time and effort saved appear to have been an important consideration. At the same time though, perhaps it is worth mentioning that at Sparta and Aegina, the fortifications seem to have been erected for the purpose of protecting the ancient acropoleis and their monuments while the Isthmian fortifications, which left the Greek and Roman sanctuary entirely outside its circuit, were designed for the protection of the Peloponnesos as a whole. The fact that the

builders at Isthmia readily used fragments of the Temple of Poseidon while at Aegina the Temple of Apollo may have been left intact seems to support this suggestion.

This leads to another important difference inasmuch as the origin of the building material for each fortification wall had an important effect on its final appearance. Most obviously, the north Inscription Wall contains the reused elements of a single Doric order structure, a feature which clearly has affected the sorting and arrangement of ashlars as well as the more uniform color and appearance of the final product. On the other hand, the construction of the walls at Isthmia and Sparta involved a much wider variety of reused structures. For the sections of the fortress studied at Isthmia, the majority of *spolia* appears to have come from the large buildings of the Sanctuary of Poseidon such as the temple and the theatre. At Sparta, blocks from smaller monuments form a larger proportion of the recycled objects and as a result, Section R features a much more varied and colorful outer surface.

Yet, the number and type of buildings available for reuse forms only half of the equation. For the process of selecting building materials also played a significant role in the final appearance of the walls in each case study. The use of columns serves as the clearest example. In spite of the fact that the building quarried for use in the Inscription Wall at Aegina most likely contained columns, not a single fragment of a column has been identified in this structure's outer façade. On the other hand, columns from a variety of sources were used in several locations at Sparta as header blocks inserted to bind the face of the wall to the mortar and rubble core and as a decorative element designed to liven the face of Section R. At Isthmia, an even wider assortment of columns was available and this is reflected in the various functions these pieces served. Furthermore, the walls at Isthmia are unique in that the much more massive column drums from the Temple of Poseidon were hacked into pieces that were then used as simple building blocks.

In addition, there is even evidence for differences in the process of construction itself. While each fortification exhibits unique features, the most easily observed difference in construction technique concerns the use of stones, brick or tile, and mortar in between courses and individual ashlars in each of the walls. The Tower 7 area at Isthmia stands at one end of the spectrum. For the ashlars used in the outer face of this section are so carefully cut and joined together that mortar or any other type of chinking was almost completely unnecessary above the level of the foundations. This was possibly also due to the innovative technique of chiseling away the rear contact surfaces of each block in a unique take on the tradition of anathyrosis. On the other end of the spectrum stand the fortifications at Sparta or the Tower 14 area at Isth-

mia, where much larger quantities of mortar and fill were required not only to level individual ashlars or even entire courses, but also to give a smooth finish to blocks that were chipped and broken prior to their reuse. Somewhere in between stand the walls at Aegina, were the use of mortar and other inserted fragments was much more sparing and aimed at smoothing the joints between already well-placed ashlars.

Yet the most important differences of all concern the evidence regarding the ancient builders' approaches to these reused materials as references to the classical past. At one end of this spectrum stands the Fortress at Isthmia. Here, visible indications of the original function of the *spolia* used in construction were generally avoided. For outside of the Roman arch and towers of the Northeast Gate, which, it is important to add, feature *spolia* used in exact accord with their original arrangement and order, all other recycled blocks were placed in the walls in a manner that masked their original decoration and function. Indeed, were it not for the materials dislodged from the walls that allow for more careful examination, one may well conclude that no *spolia* were used in construction at all. Yet many of the reused blocks scattered about the foot of the fortress walls show a consistent effort to orient their decorative surface toward the central core. This feature of the fortifications can only have come as the result of an aesthetic or ideological goal aimed at controlling the visual references to the prior history of the sanctuary.

At the other end of the spectrum stand the walls at Sparta. For here, the builders of Section R and, to judge from the evidence of the early British excavations, many other segments of the walls seem to have taken delight in the display the remains of the earlier city. Early excavation reports and photographs testify to the massive number of inscriptions inserted in the southern wall of the defenses in every possible orientation. In Section R alone, column drums, monument bases, blocks with clamp cuttings and anathyrosis exposed to view all leave little doubt that these walls were built with the demolished pieces of the classical city. At the same time though, there is hardly any indication that builders and masons considered reusing these *spolia* in keeping with their prior function, orientation, or decoration. Instead, all of these recycled elements were used in service of a new aesthetic that concentrated far more on the color and shape than anything else. Thus, inscriptions and monument bases are not necessarily reduced to the level of simple building stones, but are rather appreciated for qualities that may have been of secondary importance at best in their original phase of use. Moreover, even if the creative arrangement of square and round shaped blocks across the entire width of Section R can be considered an attempt at imitating a Doric order frieze course, that reference to the classical past was carried out in a decidedly late antique fashion.

Finally, the Inscription Wall at Aegina seems to indicate that in this particular project, the prior use of these recycled materials was simply irrelevant. For what had appeared at first to be evidence in favor of the intentional display of inscriptions turns out upon closer inspection to be much more likely a sign of simple indifference. It is now clear that on many occasions, builders inserted ashlars with inscribed surfaces into the wall in a variety of orientations so that in the end, just as many inscribed blocks face sideways or backward as face forward. Moreover, while it is true that the decorative surfaces of a number of architrave blocks were chiseled away, this seems to have come less as a result of an effort to hide the prior use and more in the interest of creating an outer façade that was as smooth as possible. For in addition to the inscriptions, there are also a number of trigylph blocks that are easily recognized in the façade of the wall. In short, none of these blocks have been consistently displayed or hidden. Rather, they have been evaluated simply in terms of their shape, dimensions, and ability to serve the overall task of fortifying and buttressing the temple temenos area to the south.

Clearly, these three sites each represent three markedly different approaches to the use of *spolia* in fortifications of the early fifth century A.D. Yet, it may actually be the case such differences extend even to the various parts of the same monument. For all of the fortifications studied here exhibit certain anomalies that might be attributed to the techniques, ideas, and motivations of individual teams of builders. This is most apparent at Isthmia, where the walls in different parts of the fortress exhibit markedly different styles of masonry. So many differences in the use of *spolia* just in the small sections studied here raises significant questions about the universal applicability of observations about the nature of later Roman reuse in any one particular region of the Mediterranean world.

Fortifications as Evidence of Spoliation

Taken as a whole, these observations allow us to draw a number of wider-ranging conclusions. First of all, it is hoped that these case studies have helped to further the argument that fortification walls are equally valid sources of evidence in the discussion of the phenomenon of spoliation. In each example, the erection of a fortification wall required just as much careful planning and organization as did any other monumental project in antiquity. Materials had to be gathered and prepared, plans made, labor organized, and then in the construction process itself, countless decisions made and solutions devised as problems inevitably occurred. One might even go so far as to suggest that far from being

projects that could be hastily and carelessly thrown together, the defenses upon which an entire city and its monuments relied were the only public structures that did not have the luxury of being rebuilt if they failed. As such, fortification walls and the massive quantities of *spolia* they incorporate deserve a much more prominent place in studies of reuse.

It is actually quite amazing to see just how well the interpretive possibilities that have been suggested in *spolia* studies to date can be applied to the three fortification walls that have been presented here. To begin with, the walls at Aegina offer the sobering evidence that not all reuse has to be charged with meaning. Unlike the carefully arranged columns in an early Christian basilica or the recarved reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, the inscribed blocks and decorative elements used in this wall do not follow a pairing principle or seek a symbolic display of carved and sculpted motifs. Rather, this wall suggests a pragmatic approach to pre-existing materials that at the same time should not be confused with simple economic behavior. The Archaic (and perhaps Hellenistic) period wall was in a state of disrepair, so the builders at Aegina carefully mended it with pieces quarried from a nearby building in a way that left parts of the previous structure still on display. This far less glamorous, yet technically accomplished utilitarian use of *spolia* has been vastly underrepresented in studies to date and needs more careful consideration as the background against which the creative reuse of materials should be seen.

At the same time though, the section of the walls studied at Sparta show us that reuse even in the effort to defend a city or settlement did not have to be completely pragmatic or devoid of aesthetic effect. It is hard to deny that the arrangement of courses according to the color and shape of the materials used in construction was intended to give an ornamental appearance to the façade of the wall. Faced with the task of fortifying the Spartan acropolis in case of future raids, the builders nevertheless took the time to carefully sort and creatively display the remains of the ancient city in a way that completely reinterpreted their original decorative function. It is at this location that aesthetic reuse comes closest to that suggested by those who have seen *spolia* as a clear break with the classical past. At the same time though, the fact that builders here sought to employ these new decorative qualities in an effort to recreate a Doric-style frieze course suggests a slightly more complicated scenario in which a possible interest in exploring *varietas* did not require a complete rejection of the classical orders.

Finally, in the Fortress at Isthmia, evidence of a concerted effort to hide any indication of reuse outside of a limited number of locations suggests a clear understanding of the importance of references to the classical past and an interest in controlling any possible misreading of *spolia* use. When *spolia* were

visibly used, as for example, in the Roman arch and rounded turrets visible in the Northeast Gate, this was done in accordance with the original use of the structures. Furthermore when pieces were used in a way that did not preserve their original function, efforts were made to mask any signs of the stone's earlier use. This offers the important lesson that what has been hidden may well be as important as what has been displayed, and the study of *spolia* in general should begin to include a consideration of its more mundane structural components.

Indeed, the fact that these secular structures have exhibited many of the same general types of reuse as the Christian basilicas that remain the central focus of *spolia* studies should, at the very least, sound a note of caution against those who have seen spoliation as a practice charged with religious meaning. While it is always possible that additional study of larger segments of these fortifications, or even other walls altogether, would provide evidence to the contrary, for the present it seems that the reuse of Hellenic shrines and monuments in the defenses studied here was not a cause for concern on a spiritual level. For example, there is little here to show that, as some have suggested, the *spolia* used in these fortifications needed to be neutralized or have their potentially dangerous power controlled and put to a better use. Nowhere in the three defensive works studied here do we find evidence of consistently inverted inscriptions, disfigured sculptures or the carving of crosses in order to convert the stones prior to reuse. In addition, it does not appear that these far more traditional and practical fortification walls were subject to the multiple layers of symbolic interpretation that M. Fabricius Hansen has demonstrated in the case of early Christian churches.[2]

Instead, it would seem that the primary goal of these projects was—as it had always been—to build a secure and visually impressive defense against attack. In this regard it is worth recalling that the reuse of building materials in the construction of urban defenses likely began long before the erection of the great Constantinian basilicas in Rome and perhaps is part of a tradition that extends as far back as the Hellenistic era.[3] As such, it may well be that the religiously and politically charged monuments that are typically offered as the earliest examples of spoliation were in fact, following techniques and practices that had been developed centuries beforehand in a vastly different architectural context.

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2 Fabricius Hansen 2003.

3 For the third century A.D. walls at Rome, see Dey 2011, at Thessalonica, see Rizos 2011 and Spieser 1974; 1984, and at Athens, see Travlos 1988 and Gregory 1982b. For Hellenistic aesthetic reuse on Kea, see Lawrence 1979, 195 and on Miletus, see McNicoll and Milner 1997, 167.

Process and Agency, Not Typology

While this argument for the primacy of fortifications is admittedly speculative, it is nevertheless the case that the examples studied here demonstrate that the traditional large-scale, typological approach to understanding spoliation masks the diversity and creative vitality of reuse practices in late antiquity.[4] It is remarkable just how much the local topography, supply of materials, and day-to-day decisions of work teams all played an important role in giving each fortification its own distinct look and feel. At the very least, the fact that such differences in the use of *spolia* have been demonstrated within a single region in Greece ought to steer us away from the questionable practice of searching the entire Mediterranean for evidence in support of typologies developed in a particular region.

To be sure, I am not the first to note the existence of regional differences in the use of *spolia* or even among fortifications.[5] Yet, it is interesting to note just how often scholars have attempted to formulate a universal set of rules regarding *spolia* use in late antiquity (e.g. axial symmetry, *varietas*, classical revivals) but are eventually forced to acknowledge the existence of a number of exceptional examples. Even different attempts to chart a progression from the use of uniform collections of columns to mismatched sets have come to contradictory conclusions.[6]

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4 See Underwood 2013, whose survey of reuse at Ostia exhibits an approach that is very similar to the one I have followed in this study.

5 Differences in the use of *spolia* in the western and eastern Mediterranean have been acknowledged by Krautheimer (1961, 300–301), Esch (1969, 46), Deichmann (1975, 32, 65, 88)—in spite of his assurances to the contrary (1975, 24)—and Brenk (1996, 67). On the dangers of a typological approach to the study of post-classical architecture, see Mango 1976, 9–11; Gregory 1997, Bowden 2003, 106–107 and Bouras 2005, 100.

6 For example, J. Burckhardt (2000, 20) was the first to suggest that uniform sets of columns was an indication that single buildings of sufficient size were still available for demolitions while mismatched sets represented the progressive destruction of temples in the Christian era. This opinion was followed by Deichmann (1975, 17–18, 40, 70–71, 82). More recently, Brenk (1996) has inverted the common interpretation that uniformity was the desired outcome and argues that uniform sets of columns seen in some structures represent a provincial failure to achieve the desired goal of variety seen in Rome's major urban centers. Brandenburg's (1996; 2011) explanation for mismatched sets of columns is decidedly more complex and relies on a host of factors from the warehousing of *spolia*, to variations in the skill of sculpting workshops to changes in the way a capital "type" was perceived in order to explain the different degrees of uniformity of reuse.

However, if instead of attempting to classify large numbers of spoliated monuments, we engage in intensive studies of the process of construction, it is possible to come to a better understanding of the potential meanings and motivations behind the use of *spolia*. In general, I have suggested that the events that occurred in the Mediterranean in the third to seventh centuries A.D. presented a new set of challenges and opportunities that led to an explosive growth in the number of different approaches to building in recycled architecture. In short, changes in the composition of the civic elite, the incentives for acts of public beneficence, the religious practices and the defensive needs of an entire empire brought about transformations in the built environment on a scale never seen before in the classical world. This led to the dilapidation of not only temples, but a whole assortment of other monuments that had once beautified the civic space.[7] As a result, materials long appreciated for their beauty and rarity suddenly became available for reuse on an unprecedented scale. This startling new development led to a breakup of older aesthetic principles that had held the natural diversification of building styles in check and allowed for a markedly greater degree of architectural experimentation. As they had done centuries before with developments in the composition and strength of mortar, or even the proportions of the individual elements of the classical orders, architects and builders began to experiment with this new type of material and achieved a wide range of results.

In assigning credit for the innovative use of *spolia* to masons and architects in spite of the fact that they remain unknown to us, this study also makes an important contribution to the concept of individual agency in classical antiquity. While historians have always recognized the ability of figures in positions of power to effect change, the role of the common individual in shaping the features and events of the classical world is a frustratingly difficult subject of study. It is clear that the words and deeds of the great historical figures known to us today took place in settings that were built and populated by countless numbers of men and women.[8] Yet it is almost impossible to trace the ways in which the daily actions of these anonymous individuals affected the course of history. Even on those rare occasions when the frequently violent expressions of public sentiment were recorded, such accounts offer only vague references to the wishes of the crowd rather than the words or actions of any one individual in particular.[9] What is more, we are left to determine the degree to which these descriptions have been influenced by the rhetorical goals or high social standing of their authors.

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7 See pp. 31–34 above.

8 Cameron 1976; Veyne et al. 1990; Millar 1998; Lim 1995; Nippel 1995; Maxwell 2006.

9 Gregory 1979; Sizgorich 2009.

In spite of its potential to give a voice to the voiceless, the traditional study of material culture has been only marginally more successful in this regard. Because they are typically focused on the evidence of human remains, demographic studies and mortuary analyses have come closest to achieving the goal of populating the lower strata of ancient society with actual people.[10] Yet in many ways even these studies have treated individuals or segments of ancient society merely as objects of study, rather than active agents capable of enacting change in their own and other's lives.

When seen in this context, the recent work of architectural historians focused on monuments as evidence for the process of construction in antiquity represents a particularly thrilling development and it is this approach that I have adopted in this study. For when examined in careful detail, architectural remains can reveal important insights into the various activities and individuals responsible for a structure's final appearance. Most interestingly of all, we are at times able to see that architects and builders were required to make adjustments in order to overcome problems that ranged from the supply of materials to the mistakes in execution of the building plan. It is at these moments that we come closest to observing the evidence for individual agency among non-elites.

It may be suggested that the lack of detail concerning the identity, or even the profession, of specific individuals who were engaged in the process of building these monuments represents a critical flaw in studies of this kind.[11] This issue is further complicated by the fact that the later Roman period appears to represent an important moment of transition in the organization and direction of the building trade as the classical architect with his theoretical knowledge gives way to the much more practically trained master builder.[12] Furthermore, the organization of work crews and their relationship to the guilds that come to have such a powerful influence in Byzantine society remains generally unclear.[13] As a result, analyses of the construction process—my own included—tend to be filled with ill-defined references to builders or work crews.

At the same time though, we should not let our inability to define the role of each individual builder keep us from moving beyond typologies of building styles to a much more informative study of the ways in which these structures were brought into existence. For in spite of the fact that we will never achieve

10 Morris 1992; Scheidel 2001.

11 See pp. 25–26, above.

12 See pp. 26–28, above.

13 Vryonis 1963. See also pp. 28–29, above.

the detail and specificity of a saint's life or an imperial biography, it is still possible to organize the evidence for individual contributions to a building project along a spectrum of traditional roles and responsibilities that governed the building trade. At the one end of this scale were the individuals responsible for the overall plan of the project and the supply of materials. At the other end were the unskilled workers who, in the case of fortification walls, were likely members of the army or the local population. In between these two were the skilled masons and builders who were responsible for realizing the wishes of the individuals at the upper end of the spectrum through the effective organization of those at the lower end.

Certainly, the relative scale of the projects studied here might give some indication of the level at which individuals made the decisions that affected the final appearance of the walls. For example, while each of the three fortifications would have required imperial assent, it is most likely that the Isthmian fortress with its associated seven kilometer long wall received much more careful direction than the walls at Sparta, and especially Aegina, which would have been the result of more localized efforts. Perhaps one could go so far as to claim that this is the reason why the walls at Isthmia reflect such a consistent effort to limit the visible use of *spolia* while those at Aegina and Sparta show either an indifferent or an innovative approach. Moreover, the details of the different sections of the Fortress at Isthmia show that the actions of individual masons or work crews often played an important role as well and it is at this level that we see the greatest degree of innovation.

Such a conclusion aligns well with what evidence is available for the organization of the building trade in late antiquity and early Byzantium. According to R. Ousterhout, "Creativity on a small scale, involving only certain parts of a building, might have led to new formulations on a larger scale, and they might even have altered the way a building was envisioned … [This] would also make sense within the conservative framework of workshop practices."[14] Thus, even though we will never know their names, a careful study of the evidence for the small innovations and adaptations made by these masons and builders suggests that at times, change occurred in small steps and stages that are nearly imperceptible to the historians who seek instead to identify the single event or moment when one period or mode of thought transitioned into another. To be sure, these momentous occasions exist as well, but they are much more rare than the minute day-to-day processes and decisions that also bring about

14 Ousterhout 1999, 38. See also Radding and Clark (1992, 12, 34–36, 44, 51) who express the same sentiment concerning innovative practices in the 11th and 12th centuries.

change. Actually, if we accept the idea that the built environment not only reflects, but also shapes the society responsible for its creation, then it must be the case that the appearance of these civic and regional defenses with which people interacted far more frequently had the greatest impact of all.

Spolia and Military Strategy

Such a conclusion also echoes the recent trend in the study of the military and strategic history of the later Roman Empire. For in rejecting E. Luttwak's thesis that under Constantine, the defense of Rome's frontiers underwent a systematic and eventually disastrous change from a pro-active policy of borders manned by legions to a more defensive policy involving a central, mobile army (*comitatenses*) and a second-rate frontier force (*limitanei*) scholars have also adopted a more nuanced interpretation of both the threat of invasion and the Roman response.[15]

To begin with, some have questioned the actual nature of the barbarian problem by suggesting that the threat to the Roman Empire varied on a regional and local scale. In contrast to the few famous pitched battles known to us in the historical sources, it was far more common for Romans to suffer small scale raids carried out by groups of infiltrators who could not easily be distinguished from those living within Roman borders.[16] What is more, aside from the fact that the boundaries of the empire were never clearly delineated, Roman interaction with barbarian groups—both those settled within the empire and those outside who were given diplomatic subsidies and special trading privileges—resulted in a non-Roman population that was constantly adapting and changing.[17]

Secondly, they have argued that the Roman response to these attacks was often reactive, unsystematic, and driven by different motivations on the part of both emperors and civic leaders. In spite of their increased use of cavalry, the mobile units of the Roman army were typically not fast enough to prevent the types of raids that formed a constant and low-level threat to populated centers.[18] Instead, military action often came after a raid or invasion revealed the existence of a growing threat to a specific part of the empire.[19] For his own

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15 Luttwak 1976.

16 Whittaker 1993, 279–292.

17 Whittaker 1994, 200–203; Heather 2010, 227–246.

18 Heather 2010, 229.

19 Mann 1979, 180.

part, the Roman emperor, who in the fourth and fifth centuries was less likely to participate in a military campaign in person, would wish to appear to be engaged in the active defense of Roman territory.[20] At the same time though, this does not rule out the possibility that other political or financial concerns may have encouraged him to pursue military measures that did not align with a rational strategic plan.[21]

It is in such an unpredictable and constantly evolving environment that we must imagine the use of *spolia* in the construction of defensive works taking place.[22] It should come as no surprise that the imperial administration addressed the defensive needs of regions and individual cities in ways that varied from the direct use of funds and skilled laborers to the remittance of taxes for construction, to the outright requirement that all residents of a city provide for the purchase of materials and completion of the walls.[23] At the same time though it is also the case that civic elites—who, according to D. Whittaker, were beginning to take on the role of local warlords—were acting on their own accord to protect their personal holdings.[24]

That the defense of the empire was addressed in a variety of ways and not always at the highest levels of society not only accounts for the co-existence of seemingly contradictory approaches to fortification, but also accords well with the analysis of the use of *spolia* in the three case studies presented here. In one of the few studies to consider the evidence of fortifications closer to the heart of the empire, Gregory long ago suggested that the construction of fortifications to protect individual settlements (*kastra*) at the same time as the erection of large curtain walls for regional defense (*diateichismata*) did not represent a mistaken duplication of effort, but instead offered a double defense against attack.[25] The present study not only supports this suggestion, but also, in concluding that the walls at Isthmia resulted from higher level planning and action than the local responses to the defensive needs of Aegina and Sparta, offers a plausible explanation of how such a reduplication of effort might have occurred. If we entertain the possibility that the walls at Aegina and Sparta resulted from local initiatives, perhaps it is the case that the use of *spolia* was displayed in an effort to impress visitors and intimidate would-be attackers. By the same logic, it is quite possible that in erecting a regional defensive wall at Isthmia, which

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20 Lee 2007, 307.

21 Heather 2010, 227–228.

22 Christie 2001.

23 *Cod. Theod.* 11.17.4; Southern and Dixon 1996, 129–132; Lee 2007, 98–100.

24 Whittaker 1994, 257–278.

25 Gregory 1992.

had actually involved the complete transformation of an ancient sanctuary, builders were instructed to avoid references to the past. Or perhaps in this case, the direct support of the emperor and the army made such reassuring references unnecessary.

Although they are admittedly speculative, these suggested interpretations are sufficient to demonstrate that when it comes to fortifications, the study of art history and military history are much more compatible than one might assume. For in both fields, critical examinations of the evidence have shown that large, overarching narratives all too often obscure the important evidence for the diversity and vitality of ancient activity on a local or even individual level. Indeed, as in the case of *spolia* use, it is only in hindsight or in the view of the few ancient authors who have discussed it that the process of defending the empire begins to look much more systematic than it was in reality. Beyond this, the study of fortifications as important examples of aesthetic or meaningful reuse also points to the fact that most discussions of ancient defensive strategy fail to consider the important role that the appearance of these walls must have played both in intimidating the enemy and in reassuring the residents of these various towns and regions. Indeed, fortifications are often deemed unsuccessful because they did not withstand an attack, but such analyses fail to consider the number of times that through their very presence and appearance, these massive walls prevented an attack from ever occurring. It is in this capacity that a closer study of the use of *spolia* in erecting defensive works can and should make a significant contribution to the study of the strategic and military history of the later Roman Empire.

Democratization in Late Antiquity

Finally, although they are based upon a limited number of examples concerning but one of many architectural and artistic developments that took place in later Roman and Byzantine times, the results of this study are significant in that they suggest an alternative interpretation of the much debated concept of democratization of elite culture in late antiquity. Whether they have interpreted the process negatively as the debasement of classical culture or more positively as the rise to prominence of lower status individuals and ideas, those who have studied democratization have nevertheless imagined an inherently adversarial relationship between elites and commoners.[26] What is more, it is

26 Rostovtzeff 1957; Mazzarino 1966; Brown 1971; Carrié 2001.

clear that historians have found only one side of this contest worthy of careful consideration.[27] For in the end, their studies have concentrated on lower status individuals only insofar as they were able to ascend to the ranks of the elites as imperial officials, military leaders or holy men, or insofar as their collective public demonstrations brought about a sufficient degree of change in the political and religious affairs of the elites to deserve mention in the written sources. Even more tellingly, if we are to accept A. Cameron's critique, what little attention has been paid to commoners in this scholarly debate has been misguided anyway, since, "it was the nature of the élite itself that changed rather than the social stratum from which it was drawn."[28] Thus, in spite of its promising name, the study of democratization has always remained focused on the ways in which elite culture brought about and adapted to change.

While the nature of the written evidence encourages such a narrow focus, this study suggests that it is by no means the only approach. For even though it may never provide the level of specificity of a hagiographical account or imperial biography, contemporary archaeological and architectural evidence may nevertheless open a window onto the actions and attitudes of groups and individuals who otherwise go unmentioned in the available texts. What is more, when examined in sufficiently careful detail, these sources of material evidence may tell a very different story. Unlike many traditional histories of late antiquity that see prominent individuals and specific episodes of conflict as the motivating forces behind social, political and economic change, the physical evidence presented here suggests that large scale change could also come about as a result of a continuous series of much less dramatic day-to-day decisions that were often made with an eye toward achieving more immediate goals. Just as the final appearance of a monument is now beginning to be recognized less as the perfect and instantaneous realization of an architectural design and more as a result of a longer term process involving numerous mistakes and unexpected outcomes that are remedied by those at the lower levels of a project's hierarchy of builders, so too might we begin to consider the ways in which other moments in history resulted from decisions made by lower status individuals and groups. This potential alternative concept of democratization does not restrict the role of non-elites to either penetration of the upper ranks of society for a lucky few or tacit approval of elite behavior for the rest, but instead follows the lead of some agency theorists in focusing on the ways in

27 Brown 2000.

28 Cameron 2004, 107.

which the minute day-to-day actions of common individuals and groups can effect large scale and lasting change.

The general anonymity of the building managers and masons responsible for the erection of numerous fortifications like the ones studied here suggests that they were not members of elite society, nor did they achieve this status as a result of their work on these monuments. Yet, through their creations, these individuals had a profound effect on the way in which people lived, how safe they felt, how they moved through their cities, and how their cities appeared to visitors and enemies alike. It is also possible that daily interactions with such defensive works may have had a strong influence on what came to be considered aesthetically appealing in the appearance of a much wider variety of buildings. To be sure, the location, dimensions and supply of construction materials for these walls must have been determined by patrons, architects, and civil magistrates, who over time came under the centralized control of the imperial bureaucracy. Yet beyond this point, in many ways, it was the masons, bricklayers and other skilled craftsmen who determined on their own the final appearance of these defensive works—the sheer lack of uniformity between sites and even locations at the same site stands as a clear illustration of this point. Such changes are admittedly subtle and lack the dramatic impact of a civil war, an earthquake or the rise to power of a bishop or emperor, but it is nevertheless worth considering in more detail how the conclusions drawn here regarding the role of non-elites in bringing about architectural change might impact the longstanding debate over continuities and discontinuities between the classical and post-classical world.

It is inevitable with any topic considered along very general lines and lacking in careful study that assumptions and bold generalizations, either positive or, as in the case of late antiquity, negative, will take the place of actual evidence. In addition it is always the case that simple, straightforward answers hold an attraction and appeal that tends to discourage more careful considerations. But when one takes the time to look carefully, a much more complex, but also exciting and informative picture begins to emerge. Like buried treasure, the spoliated structures of late antique Greece contain unimaginable wealth for those who study transitional moments in antiquity. These structures are the only record for the thoughts and ideas of countless builders and architects in antiquity. They speak to us still today in stones and mortar, and for those who would learn that language, the value of such a conversation is nearly immeasurable.

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